

THE HISTORY OF THE  
CULT OF NARASIMHA  
IN RAYALASEEMA



DR. N. ADINARAYANA

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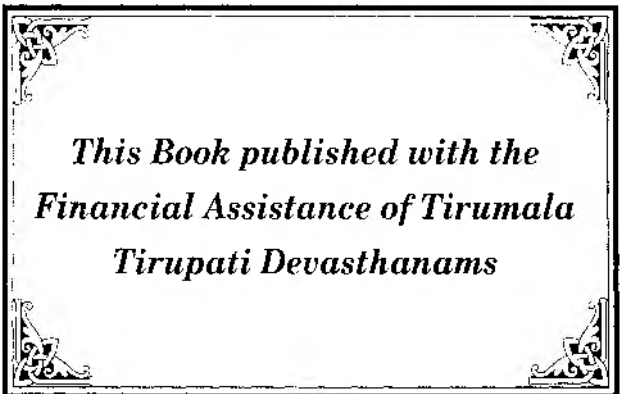
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### ***Cover illustration***

Vidara Narasimha on the pillar in the Kalyanamandapa of  
Sri Venkateswara Temple in Tirumala

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ARE	: Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Epigraphy.
A.P.G.R.Ep	: Andhra Pradesh Government Reports on Epigraphy.
ASIAR	: Archaeological Survey of India - Annual Report
CP	: Copper Plate
EA	: Epigraphia Andhrica
EI	: Epigraphia Indica
Hind. Ico.	: Hindu Iconography (Gopinatha Rao, T.A.)
IA	: Indian Antiquary
IAD	: Inscriptions of Andhra Dēsa (Rama Rao, M.)
IAP	: Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh
JAHRS	: Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society
JNSI	: Journal of Numismatic Society of India
JTA	: Journal of Telugu Academy
Mac MSS (S.A.)	: Mackenzie Manuscripts (A.P. Govt, State Archives Copy and Sahitya Academy)
SII	: South Indian Inscriptions
TTDI	: Tirumala Tirupati Dēvasthānam Inscriptions.
TTDER	: Tirumala Tirupati Dēvasthānam Epigraphical Report.

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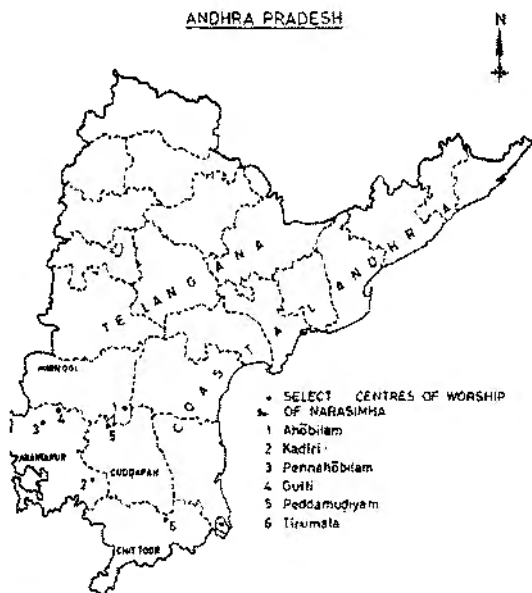
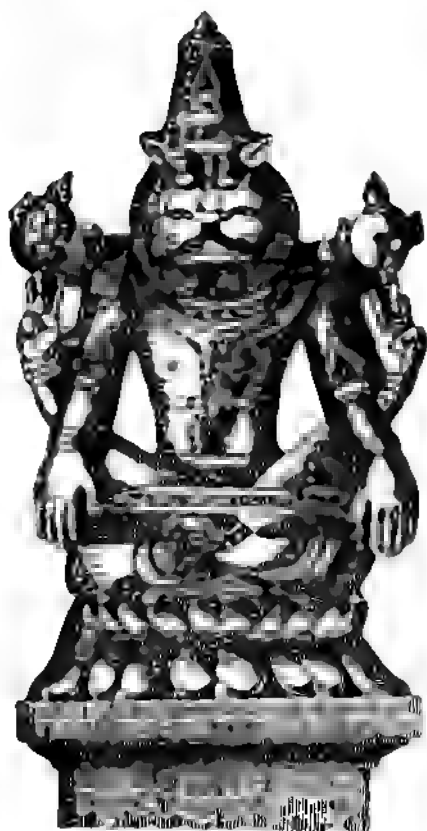


FIG: ANADHRA PRADESH LOCATION OF SELECT CENTRES OF  
WORSHIP OF NARASIMHA IN RAYALASEEMA

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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

Among the several religious cults in India, the cult of Narasimha is an important one. There are numerous centres of worship of Narasimha spread in different parts of our country. But this cult is more widespread in Andhra Pradesh and a number of temples of Narasimha are found in Andhra Pradesh. In Rāyalaseema of Andhra Pradesh, as per the survey made by me, there are eighty eight temples dedicated to Narasimha. These temples suggest that the cult of Narasimha was popular and widely prevalent in Rayalaseema during 12<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

#### 1. Review of Literature

In general religious works of India, the space devoted to Narasimha cult is very meagre. Even in the specialised religious works. Like "Development of Religion in South India" by Nilakanta Sastri, the space devoted to this subject is very little.<sup>1</sup> There are separate works on religious sects such as "The origin and Development of Vaishnavism" by Suvira Jaiswal,<sup>2</sup> "Evolution of Hindu sects by Chattopadhyaya",<sup>3</sup> "The Vaishnava sects" "The Saiva sects - "Mother worship" by Swami Tatwananda,<sup>4</sup> But these works also contain very little material on this important cult. Of Late, there are some specialised works on cults like "The cult of Vithoba",<sup>5</sup> "The cult of Siva",<sup>6</sup> "The cult of Skandakārttikeya in Ancient India",<sup>7</sup> "The cult of Jagannātha" and<sup>8</sup> "Śakti cult in Ancient India",<sup>9</sup> by distinguished scholars like S.J.G.A. Deleury, V.P. Kanthumathunatha Pillai, Asimkumar Chatterjee, K.C. Misra and Pushpendra Kumar respectively.

There are also some general works dealing with religions in a general way viz., "Religious Institutions and cults in the Deccan" by Ramendranath Nandi,<sup>10</sup> and "Religion in Andhra" by B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao.<sup>11</sup> There are also few published works exclusively dealing with the Narasimha cult, viz., "History of the cult of Narasimha in Telangana" and "The History of the cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh" by M. Narasimhācharya.<sup>12</sup> In the latter work, the Narasimha cult in Rāyalaseema is dealt with in a fragmentary manner. The Present Rāyalaseema, consists of four districts, namely (i) Anantapūr, (ii), Chittoor, (iii) Cuddapah and (iv) Kurnool. The word 'Rāyalaseema' means in Telugu The Seema or 'the land ruled over by the Rāyas of Vijayanagara.

From what has been said above, it is clear that till now there is no comprehensive work on the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. As such there is a need for a comprehensive work on 'The cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema and therefore this has been selected for my research work.

## **2. Scope and Aim of the Study.**

The main aim of the study is (i) to study and reconstruct the aspects of origin, antiquity and growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema and also (ii) to study the select centres of worship of Narasimha, rituals and festivals performed therein and the iconography of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. The study is from 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The reasons for starting the study from 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. are that firstly, before that date, there are only stray references to Narasimha worship from which it is rather difficult to trace out the development of the cult of Narasimha

### **Introduction**

in Rāyalaseema. Epigraphical references to Narasimha worship are available only from 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Of course, certain Puranic and legendary accounts give information about the worship of Narasimha, but their historic authenticity can not be established. Secondly, it is from that century onwards, the works of Telugu Literature like *Nṛsiṃhapurāṇa of Errapragada* and certain general Sanskrit works have been available. These contain useful information about Narasimha Mythology and worship. A brief story of Narasimha in *Mōkṣadhārma of Anusaśānikaparvam* is given in *Āndhra Mahābhārata* of Nannaya. The *Nṛsiṃhapurāṇa* of Errapragada was dedicated to God Ahōbila Nṛsiṃhaswāmy. "The fifth chapter of the *Purāṇa* describes the importance of Ahōbila-Kshētra and the God."<sup>13</sup> The work concludes with the study of the cult in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. for the following reasons. Firstly, it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that the Vijayanagara Kingdom which became famous as the saviour of Hindu religion, had finally come to an end. The last known record of the cult during the Vijayanagara period in Rāyalaseema is the grant of Venatapatirāya-II, dated 1609 A.D. This grant of 1609 A.D. from Chirna Ahōbilam temple attests this fact<sup>14</sup>. After 1609 A.D. there are no epigraphs registering the grants to the temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. Thus, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively witness the beginning and end of the vigorous development of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

### **3. Sources:**

The sources for the study of the Narasimha cult in Rāyalaseema from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. are principally Archaeological and Literary.

### **1. Archaeological Sources:**

The Archaeological sources include (i) inscriptions (ii) temples and (iii) sculptures of Narasimha. These serve as the data for the study of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema and form an authentic source material for this study

#### **(i) Inscriptions :**

The cult of Narasimha can be traced from numerous inscriptions incised on rocks, copper plates and in the temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. The inscriptions of Western Chālukyas, Hoysalas, Yādavas, Kākatīyas, Redḍis of Konḍavīdu and Rājahmundry, the Rāyas of Vijayanagar and their feudatory chiefs attest the prevalence of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. There are comparatively fewer inscriptions in the early period (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) of our study and as we go on to the later period (Vijayanagara period) there are a number of grants made to the temples of Narasimha by the Rāyas of Vijayanagara and their feudatory chiefs. These epigraphic sources have been used to trace out the growth and development of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema during this period. The inscriptions ranging from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries A D register the charities of kings, nobles, feudatory chiefs and private individuals to the temples of Narasimha. The inscriptions also register the consecration of images and construction of temples. Further, from the inscriptions we come to know about the renovation of temples, donation of cash and kind, gifts of lands, gardens, construction of *gōpuras*, *mandapas*, provisions made for offerings and celebration of *utsavas* (festivals), daily worship and the perpetual maintenance of temples by the kings,



## ***Introduction***

nobles and others. The inscriptions of the dynasties viz., Western Chālukyas, Hoyasalas, Yādavas, Kākatiyas, Reddis of Kondaviḍu and Rājahmundry and the Rāyas of Vijayanagara speak of the munificent measures undertaken by them for the development of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

### **(i) Temples of Narasimha :**

The number of temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema are greater than those in coastal Andhra and Telangāṇa of Andhra Pradesh. As per the survey made by me, there are eighty eight temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. Among them, forty four temples are referred to in the inscriptions, while the rest lack historical material. And of the forty four temples, six temples emerged as major centres, where the daily worship is going on and they can be seen even today. The six major centres of worship of Narasimha are located in Rāyalaseema at Ahōbīlam in Kurnool District, Kadiri, Gutti and Pennahōbīlam in Anantapur district, Tirumala in Chittoor district and Peddamudiyaṁ in Cuddapah district. These six centres of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema withstanding the ravages of time still speak of their past glory. The main shrine, pillars in the *mandapas* carved with rich sculpture and architecture of the temples throw light on the religious and cultural aspects of cult-history under study.

### **(i) Sculptures and Images of Narasimha :**

The sculptures and the images of Narasimha found in this area throw light on the cult. The origin and antiquity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema can be traced from a stone plaque which is found at Peddamudiyaṁ village in Cuddapah district. In it there is a representation of nine deities including Narasimha which is third in

order from left and it belongs to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>15</sup> The sculptures of God Narasimha and Chenchita at Upper Ahōbīlam and Lower Ahōbīlam speak of the association of God Narasimha with Chenchita, a tribal woman. There are two rare sculptures of Narasimha on a lion and Narasimha in animal representation as lion on the pillars of the maṇḍapas in the Tirumala temple in Chittoor district. These rare but important sculptures, bring to light certain unknown forms of Narasimha. The select temples of Narasimha and other temples of Vishnu in Rāyalaseema contain innumerable number of images and sculptures on the pillars, walls etc. These images and sculptures serve as the authentic data for the study of the iconographic features of various forms of Narasimha viz., Kēvala Narasimha, Yōga Narasimha, Gīrjā Narasimha, Sthauna Narasimha, Lakṣmī Narasimha and Prahlādanugrahaṁūrti. The available sculptures and images of Narasimha are also highly useful to compare them with the prescriptions of the Agamic texts, and also to trace out their iconographic peculiarities.

## **2. Literary Sources**

Information regarding the worship and cult of Narasimha is found in a wide range of devotional literature. The literary sources for the study of the cult may be classified into the following categories on the basis of the language in which they have been composed.

### **(i) Sanskrit :**

#### **1. Rāmābhyaṇam of Śāḷuva Narasimha :**

This is a Sanskrit work by Śāḷuva Narasimha (1486-1491 A.D.), an illustrious king of Vijayanagara and a great devotee of god Narasimha of Ahōbīlam. The introduction of *Rāmābhyaṇam*

clearly refers to the king's birth by the grace of God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam. It is mentioned in Rāmābhyudayam that Sāluva Gunda who did not have children for a long time, retired to Ahōbīlam and made gifts to the Lord. In a dream God Narasimha blessed him with a son, with all virtues. Accordingly King Sāluva Guṇḍa had a son, who was named after Narasimha, the God of Ahōbīlam.<sup>16</sup>

## **2. Vāsāntika Parināyam of Śrīvan Śaṭhakōpayatīndra Mahā Dēśika.**

The author is the pontiff of Ahōbīla Maṭh, who flourished in circa 1579 A.D. The theme of the story is the marriage of God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam with a Chenchu woman of Nallamala forest in Kurnool district. This Sanskrit Drama contains five acts. The hero was Garudāchala Narasimha Swamy of Ahōbīlam and the heroine was Vāsāntika, a tribal (Sabara ) woman.<sup>17</sup>

### **(ii) Tamil :**

Peria Tirumozhi of Tirumangai Ālvār

Tirumangai Ālvār, the last of the Vaishnavite Ālvārs, glorified in ten verses, in his Peria Tirumozhi. The Alvar praises Ahōbīlam as 'Śingavēlkuṇṇam' which means the youthful lion, a reference to god Narasimha who resides on the hill.<sup>18</sup>

### **(iii) Telugu :**

The following are the Telugu Literary works which supply information directly about the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

## **1. Naraśimha Purāṇa of Eṣṣapragada**

Eṣṣapragada (1324-1349 A.D ) one of the famous Kavitraya (Trinity) composed *Lakṣmī Naraśimha Purāṇa* and dedicated it to God Ahōbīla Narasimha Swamy. In the fifth chapter of the purāṇa,

he describes the importance of Ahōbila Kshētra and of the God and mentions the place as a centre of pilgrimage.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Sankīrtanas of Thāllapāka Poets**

The Tāllapāka Poets such as Annamayya (1408-1507 A.D.) and Peda Tīrimalāchāryulu (1460-1547 A.D.) composed a number of *Sankīrtanas* (devotional songs) in praise of Ahōbila Narasimha of Ahōbīlam.<sup>20</sup> It is stated that the third Tallapaka poet, Tīrimalāchāryulu (1485-1550 A.D.) had made 'Pratistha (consecration) of the image of Narasimha in the Hanuman shrine at Tirupati'.<sup>21</sup> It is stated that Annamayya visited the Ahobilam temple and sang the glory of God Narasimha.<sup>22</sup> It is attested by two copper plates of Annamāchārya's *Kīrtanas*, which are found at Ahōbīlam.<sup>23</sup> He praised the Lord of Upper Ahōbīlam as the boon-giver.

## **3. Vishnu Purāna of Vennelakanṭi Sūraṇa**

Vennelakanṭi Sūraṇa, who flourished in the first part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.,<sup>24</sup> had translated the Sanskrit Vishnu Purāna into Telugu, named 'Andhra Śrī Vishnu Purānam,' describing the incarnation of God Vishnu. The legend of Prahlāda and the birth of God Narasimha and the destruction of the demon, Hīranyakaśipu are narrated in this purāṇa.

## **4. Garudāchala Vilāsamu of Ōbayamantri**

Ōbayamantri, who flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>25</sup> wrote 'Garudāchala Vilāsamu', a very popular Yakshagana, describing the supposed marriage of God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam with a girl belonging to the Chenchu tribe.<sup>26</sup>

## **5. Folk Songs**

The folk songs also help us to trace out the growth and popularity of the cult among the masses. The God Narasimha is also popular in the themes of folk-songs or the ballads. The folk-songs describe the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of Narasimha (Man-I.101).<sup>27</sup> Further folk-songs which describe the incarnation of Narasimha refers to Śimhādri.<sup>28</sup> Though we cannot establish their antiquity, they help us to trace out the growth and popularity of the cult among the masses.

Besides the above stated literary works, we have the following Telugu literary sources, which make passing references about the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema area.

### **1. Pratāpa Charitra Of Ēkāmranātha :**

It is mentioned in the Pratāpa Charitra of 'Ēkāmranātha' that Ahōbīlam and other temples enjoyed the patronage from the treasury of Kākātīya Pratāparudra II<sup>29</sup> (1290-1323 A D )

### **2. Harivamśam (Uttara Bhāgam) Of Eṣṣapragada :**

Eṣṣapragada wrote *Harivamśam* (Uttara Bhāgam) It is stated in the preface that the ruler Vēma Reddy (1324-53) had built the steps to the upper Ahōbīlam.<sup>30</sup>

### **3. Bhōjarājīyam of Anantamātya :**

Anantamātya, who flourished in the fifteenth century A D.,<sup>31</sup> dedicated his work, named 'Bhōjarājīyam' to God Ahōbīla Narasimha. The same God in the beginning and Yōgananda Ahōbālanātha Narasimha at the end are mentioned in it<sup>32</sup>

### **4. Kāsikhaṇḍam of Śrīnātha :**

The popular Telugu romantic poet and 'Kavisārvabhauma',

Śrīnātha wrote 'Śrī Kāśikhandaṁ' and dedicated it to king Vīrabhadra Reddy of Rājamahēndravaram in 1440 A.D.<sup>33</sup> In it, the God of Ahōbīlam is mentioned.

### **Sthalapurāṇas of The Temples:**

There are *Sthalapurāṇas* written and published in Telugu and English. They belong to the modern period and help us to know certain traditions of the past which are not recorded in history. The *Sthalapurāṇas*, forming a part and parcel of the traditions, have become powerful instruments for propagating faith in a particular God among the people and thus, the cult developed

#### **Telugu :**

There are *Sthalapurāṇas* in Telugu. These help us to know certain traditions of the past, which are not recorded in history.

- (1) Śrī Ahōbīla Kṣētram, published by the Dēvasthānam of Ahōbīlam.
- (2) Kadiri Sthalapurāṇam, published by the temple authorities.

#### **English :**

The following *Sthalapurāṇas* of temples dedicated to God Narasimha are published in English and they belong to the modern period.

- (1) History and Sanctity of Śrī Ahōbīla Kṣētra, published by the Dēvasthānam of Ahobīlam.
- (2) Śrī Ahōbīla Kṣētra and Ahōbīla Maṭh, published by Dēvasthānam of Ahōbīlam, 1955.

### **Manuscripts :**

In addition to the above stated literary sources, there are also manuscripts available for the study of the cult of Narasimha in

Rāyalaseema. The manuscripts (MSS) which bear no date are helpful to know something about the cult of Narasimha and popularity of Narasimha centres in Rāyalaseema.

There are six manuscripts of the Ahōbīlam temple, which give us some information about the God of Ahōbīlam.

**(i) Lakshmi Narasimha Vilāsamu :**

This is in three 'Aśvasas' written by Paidipāti Venkata Narasimha Kavī. It describes the love of God Narasimha towards a Chenchu girl, Lakshmi and ultimately their reconciliation and marriage.<sup>34</sup>

**(ii) Vāsantika Parinayam :**

This is an 'Yakshagaṇa' written by Kranja Venkatādnī. It refers to the marriage of Ahōbīla Narasimha with a Chenchu girl.<sup>35</sup>

**(iii) Lakshmi Narasimha Charitramu :**

Kaṭṭamañchi Kāmēswara Kavī wrote 'Lakshmi, Narasimha Charitramu', which is a 'Prabandha' narrating the legend of the incarnation of Narasimha and the greatness of the four shrines, wherein God Narasimha is worshipped, viz., Ahōbīla, Harampāpa, krtasanca and Sīrūha Śāila.<sup>36</sup>

**(iv) Ahubala Narasimha Satakam :**

It is a *Śataka* of a hundred verses on palm - leaves dedicated to Ahubala Narasimha and the name of the author is not known.<sup>37</sup>

**(v) Sīkhi Narasimha Satakamu :**

It mentions that Sīkhi Narasimha Swamy is residing on a hill of Lower Ahōbīlam. It begins with the refrain of 'Sīkhi Narasimha' in each verse.<sup>38</sup>

**(vi) Narasimha Dandakamu :**

This is written by Mungara Appanna. The story of Prahlāda, contained in the *Saptama Skanada of Bhāgavata*, is described in the '*Dandakam*' as narrated by Nārada to Yudhishthira. It is dedicated to God Narasimha, Worshipped at Garuḍādri, probably Ahōbīlam<sup>39</sup>

**Purāṇas :**

Apart from the above state sources, we have references to Narasimha in the purāṇas v z., 1 Vāyupurāṇa, 2. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 3 Vishnu Purāṇa, 4 Matsya Purāṇa, 5. Harivamsa, 6 Vishṇu Dharmōttara Purāṇa, 7 Narasimha Purāṇa, 8. Kumāra Purāṇa, 9 Saura Purāṇa, 10. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 11. Agni Purāṇa, 12. Nandīya Purāṇa, 13. Linga Purāṇa and, 14 Padma Purāṇa. 'Sri Naraśimhamañtra' is given in the *Agni Purāṇa*. The *Vishṇu Dharmōttara Purāṇa* prescribes the worship of Narasimha for removing all hindrances.<sup>40</sup>

Next to the *Purāṇas*, the works of the poets occupy an important position in preserving and perpetuating the cult of Narasimha. In '*Abhigñāna Śakuntala*', Kālidāsa speaks of Narasimha as 'Puruṣa Kṛsari'.<sup>41</sup>

The great advaita preacher and philosopher, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya, impressed middle class people particularly, the smārthas with his '*Lakṣmī Narasimha Sūtram*', written in twenty two slokas, invoking the help of Narasimha, when he was in serious trouble.<sup>42</sup> The impact of Sankara on the Smārta Brahmins and on others that the traditions of the worship of Narasimha is still continued by the Brahmins in particular and others in general with a notion that he comes out to their rescue, when they are critically in danger.



## **Research Design and Methodology**

The Methodology followed for this study is as follows.

- (i) To study the origin, antiquity and growth of the Narasimha cult and select centres of worship of Narasimha, rituals and festivals performed therein, data has been collected from the relevant epigraphs and from a wide range of devotional literature.
- (ii) For the study of the iconographic features of various forms of Narasimha and to take photographs on them, a systematic field survey has been conducted to cover the important centres (temples) of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

The research design of the book is as follows.

The book has Seven Chapters. The first chapter 'Introduction' deals with the review of literature, scope and aim of the study, sources and Methodology and Research Design.

The Second Chapter deals with the 'Origin and antiquity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema'

The Third Chapter deals with 'The Growth of Narasimha cult in Rayalaseema' from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D'.

The select centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema are studied in the Fourth Chapter

The Fifth Chapter contains a study of the 'Rituals and Festivals' performed in the select centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalasema.

The Sixth Chapter deals with the study of the iconographic features of nine forms of Narasimha represented in the temples under study.

The Last Chapter 'Chapter Seven' 'Conclusion' deals with the review of the cult and its growth and the iconographic peculiarities of the images and sculptures of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

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### ***Introduction***

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## ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY OF THE CULT OF NARASIMHA

From the early times, the worship of the 'Avatāras' of Vishnu is an important feature of the Brahmanical religion. The germ of incarnation or *avatāra* concept is to be traced in the *Rigvēda* itself, in an instance - the boar incarnation <sup>1</sup> The earliest reference to Narasimha form of Vishnu is found in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* which alludes to Narasimha (Man - Lion) In it, the earth is said to have been restored from the waters by a black boar with a hundred arms. He is invoked and described as "possessing sharp claws and fangs" <sup>2</sup> In the *Mahā Nārāyaṇa Upanishad*, the 'Gāyatrīmantra' of Narasimha is given. <sup>3</sup> We have two Upanishads, the *Nṛsiṃha Pūrva Tapanīya Upanishad* and *Nṛsiṃha Uttara Utapanīya Upanishad*, which give a full account of greatness of God Narasimha <sup>4</sup> It is stated in the *Narasimha Pūrvatapanīya Upanishad* that Prajāpati practised penance Then he saw the 'Mantrarāja' (Royal formula) related to Narasimha and composed in the Anustubh metre with thirty two syllables. It is said that the prajāpati created the world by means of this formula <sup>5</sup>

When the gods approached Brahma, He told them <sup>6</sup>

"Kshīrō darnava sayinam Nṛikēsari

Vigraham param padam samajanyat"

"If one knows the royal formula of god who is lying in the milk of ocean and whose form is Nrisimha, he attains immortality"

As such Mahāvishnu who is lying in the milk of ocean is none other than Nṛsiṃha. In the above Anustubh (royal formula). it is

stated that there are nine forms of Narasimha, which correspond to the concept of 'Nava Narasimhas' ( Nine forms of Narasimha) we have in various parts of Rāyalaseema. The nine forms of Narasimha are<sup>7</sup>

1. Ugra (Angry)
2. Vīra (Fighting)
3. Mahāviṣṇu (Lakṣmī Narasimha)
4. Jvalanta (Emitting flames of Fire)
5. Sarvatōmukha Narasimha (with a number of faces)
6. Narasimha (ordinary Narasimha)
7. Bhīṣana (frightful)
8. Bhādra (adorable) and
9. Mrityōr - mṛtyu (the killer of death)

The above stated Nine forms (Nava Narasimhas) are still being worshipped in the Ahōbilam temple of Kurnool District in Rāyalaseema. This Ahobilam temple is popularly called 'Nava Narasimha Kṣhētra'. It is stated that the term 'Nava Narasimha' is usually taken to mean the nine forms of Narasimha, which are enumerated below<sup>8</sup>

"It can also be taken to refer to, Navaka Narasimha", Navaka means fresh, new, young, or novice, Lord Narasimha having sprung fresh from a 'stambha' (Pillar) in response to the prayer of his devotee (Prahlaḍa) can be called Navaka Narasimha or Sthauna Narasimha. In this form, he looks like a pillar of fire and is ferocious.

#### **Epics :**

In addition to the Vēdas, the epics also give information about the god Narasimha and the cult.

### *Origin and antiquity of the cult of Narasimha*

In *Mahābhārata*, Narasimha is considered to be one of the incarnations of Vishnu.<sup>9</sup> There is a brief story of Narasimha in the *Moksha Dharma* of *Mahābhārata*

#### **Bhāgavata :**

*Bhāgavata* which contains the early exposition of the theory of incarnation (avatara) clearly states the purpose of 'avatāra' of Vishnu as follows. For the protection of the virtuous and the destruction of the wicked and for the re-establishment of Dharma, I appear in age after age<sup>10</sup> According to the tradition, the Kṛtayuga witnessed the fourth 'avatāra' of Vishnu as Narasimha (Man Lion).

#### **Purānas :**

The story of Narasimha is found in the *Vāyupurāṇa*, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa*, *Vishnu Purāṇa*, *Harī Vamśa*, *Narasimha Purāṇa*, *Kūrma Purāṇa*, *Saura Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavath Purāṇa*, *Linga Purāṇa* and *Nārada Purāṇa* and in the *Uttara Khanda* of *Padma Purāṇa*. The *Narasimha Purāṇa* says that the sages came from far and wide, viz., *Himālayas*, *Naimisaranya*, *Vindhya* mountain, *Śrīsaila* (*Rāyalaseema*), *Pampa* and so on, to *Prayāga* with their disciples.<sup>11</sup> R.C. Hazra assigns the period of 400 - 500 A.D. for this *Purāṇa*.<sup>12</sup> "Sri Narasimha Mantra is given in the *Agni Purāṇa*"<sup>13</sup> The *Vishnudharmottara Purāṇa* prescribes the worship of Narasimha for removing all hindrances".<sup>14</sup>

An interesting feature of the *Vishnu Dharmōttara purāṇa* is that it refers to the man - lion incarnation in the *Madrādēśa*,<sup>15</sup> H Rayachaudhuri points out that the *Madrakas* were a people living in the central Punjab with their capital at *Sialkot*.<sup>16</sup> Till now, the worship of Narasimha is very popular in Punjab, especially in the *Kangra*



district. Men and women worship this God in the form of a sacred coconut on every Sunday. The Vishnu Dharmōttara Purāṇa is assigned to the period of 400-500 A.D.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the purāṇas, the poetical works have also helped in perpetuating the cult of Narasimha. In “Abhigñāna Sākuntalam”, poet Kālidāsa mentions Narasimha as “Purusha Kēśari”.<sup>18</sup>

The number of ‘Avatāras’ (incarnations) of Vishnu varies from 10 to 39 from tradition to tradition. But ‘Dasāvatāras’ (Ten major incarnations) are commonly accepted, of which the fourth is that of Narasimha. It is held that the standard list of the ten incarnations did not find general acceptance before the eight century A.D.<sup>19</sup> Although the number of primary incarnations of Vishnu appears to have been fixed quite at ten, their names vary in the list given in the early Purāṇas.

The later Vaishnava literature recognises the following three types of ‘Avatāras’<sup>20</sup>.

1. Pūrṇāvatāra (Complete incarnation)
2. Arṇsāvatāra (Part of the Divine incarnation)
3. Āvēsa (Partial incarnation of a temporary name)

Several Indian epigraphic records between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. attest to the popularity of worshipping different incarnations of God.<sup>21</sup> With the increasing popularity of incarnations, the ‘Vyūha’ concept receded more into the background. Ahirbudhya Samhita, which is one of the earliest Pāñcharātra works, assignable to a date earlier than the 8th century A.D.,<sup>22</sup> recognises the five fold forms of the God, they are:

### *Origin and antiquity of the cult of Narasimha*

- a. Para (transcendent)
- b. Vyūha (Emnatory i e., Vasudeva, Samkarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha)
- c. Vibhava (incarnatory)
- d. Antaryāmin (immanent) and
- e. Arca (that which resides in idols and images in the temples and houses like Svayam Vyakta, Drvya, Śiddha, Arsa, Mānusa and Grahārca).

God Vāsudēva as the hero of 'Vrushṇi' vamiṣa is clearly mentioned in the Mahābhārata. He was later depicted and worshiped along with his brother and sons forming a group of five.<sup>23</sup> Vāsudēva, Saṁkarshṇa, Anirudda, Pradyumna, and Śaṁba were heroes of Vrushṇi race, later on deified. This proposition has been justified by the archaeological evidence. The most interesting of all is the Mōra well inscription, which stands as an evidence for the prevalence of the worship of the images of the Pañchavīras (five heroes) installed in a temple as early as the first century B.C.<sup>24</sup> "Bhāgavatam Vṛiṣṇam Pañchā Vīranam Pratimah"

The Pañchavīra worship along with god Vishnu as Narasimha finds favour in coastal Andhra Pradesh at Koṇḍamōṭu during the early part of fourth century A.D.<sup>25</sup> As such, this sculptured form found at Koṇḍamōṭu showing Vishnu in the form of Narasimha in an anthropomorphic form, combining human and animal features, is perhaps the first of its kind.

### **Bhāgavata Movement of the Ālvārs :**

The next important stage in the development of the cult of Narasimha is the Bhāgavata movement by the Vaishṇava Ālvārs

and Āchāryas. The Ālvārs played a very significant role in shaping the religious life of the people of the south. The orthodox Vaishnavas believe that the Ālvārs, who hailed from different parts of the Tamil country,<sup>26</sup> were incarnations of the sacred weapons, the sacred ornaments and sacred vehicles of Vishnu.<sup>27</sup> Regarding the date of the Ālvārs, there is a controversy. Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyyangar says that the Ālvārs in all probability flourished in the period marked by the extreme limits of A.D. 500-850.<sup>28</sup> But D.C. Sircar slightly differing from this view states that the Ālvārs may be roughly placed between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>29</sup> K. A. Neelakanta Sastri says that "the period of the development of Bhakti movement in south may be said to have lasted from the 6<sup>th</sup> century to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D."<sup>30</sup> In any case, the Ālvārs lived before 900 A.D. Out of twelve Ālvārs, the following nine had praised and worshiped God Narasimha.

1. Pōygai Ālvār
2. Būtattālvār
3. Pēy Ālvār
4. Tirumālīśai Ālvār
5. Nammālvār
6. Periyālvār<sup>31</sup>
7. Śūḍikkuḍutta Nāchchiyār (Gōḍa or Āṇḍaḷ)
8. Tiruppan Ālvār<sup>32</sup>
9. Tirumangai Ālvār

The collection of Tamil works by the Ālvārs, especially the Tēngalai sect is regarded as sacred as the Sanskrit Vēdas.<sup>33</sup> The four thousand hymns of the Ālvārs have been frequently sung; and the verses are recited in the temples, dedicated to God Vishnu, by the Vaishnavas throughout the country even to this day

## **The Religious Preachers:**

The religious preachers and teachers also contributed their mite for enriching and propagating the cult of Narasimha. Notable among them were Śankarāchārya, Rāmānujāchārya, Kurattālvān, Mādhavachārya, Vēdānta Dēśika, Manavāla Mahāmuni (Varavara Muni), and Śāsta Parāṅkuśa of Ahōbila math

### **1. Ādi Śankarāchārya**

Ādi Śankarāchārya, (788-820 A D) the greatest Advaita preacher and philosopher, impressed millions of people with his philosophy and illustrious life. The tradition is that Sankara wrote “Lakṣmī Narasimha Karavalamba Stōtram”,<sup>34</sup> in twenty ślokaś (stanzas) invoking the help of God Narasimha, when he was in serious trouble. It is a hymn of praise as the man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu attributed to Sankaracharya. Besides, *Narasimha Pāñcharatna Stōtram* and *Narasimha Stōtram*,<sup>35</sup> are also attributed to him. It is stated that in the “Viṣṇu Sahasraṇāma Stōtra Bhāṣya”, Sankara writes that the words Viṣṇu ‘Śimha’ and ‘Sarvapraharayudhaḥ’ refer to Śingappirān (Narasimha).<sup>36</sup>

### **2. Rāmānujāchārya (1017-1137 A.D)**

Rāmānujāchārya propagated Narasimha cult along with Vaiṣṇavism. He refers to God Narasimha as “One who killed Hiranya Kaśipu”.<sup>37</sup> There is an oral tradition that Rāmānuja visited a number of Viṣṇu temples in his mission to spread the gospel of Sri Vaisnavism throughout India. It is stated that Tanśyāḍri (Tirupati), Simhāchalam and Śrīkākulam were among the places, visited by Rāmānuja. When Rāmānuja was on tour, he went to Mithila (śālagrāma) and there he visited the temples of Yōganāṇḍa

Narasimha. There he performed a hōma sacrifice for Narasimha Swamy.

### **3. Kurattālvān**

Kurattālvān, who is believed to be a contemporary of Rāmānuja, praised God Narasimha in three ślokas.<sup>38</sup>

### **4. Mādhavāchārya**

Mādhavāchārya, lived during the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>39</sup> He visited a temple of Narasimha in Taulavadēsa, riding on a boy.<sup>40</sup> He also wrote 'Nṛsiṃha Nakha Stutiḥ' in two ślokas on seeing the glory of God Narasimha.<sup>41</sup> There is a tradition, that before and after the worship of God, the 'Nakhastutiḥ' of Mādhava, is recited by all the Mādhvas even now.

### **5. Vēdānta Dēśika**

Vēdānta Dēśika enriched the Vaiṣṇava world with his teachings and writings during 1290-1369 A.D.<sup>42</sup> He praised God Narasimha in his works, namely 'Stōtraṇi'<sup>43</sup> and Dasavatāra Stōtram'.<sup>44</sup> It is also known that he wrote 'Nṛsiṃhaśataka' in eight ślokas in praise of God Narasimha, which is preserved in the government Oriental Manuscript Library, Madras.

### **6. Manavāla Mahāmuni**

Manavāla Mahāmuni alias Varavaramuni lived from 1370 A.D. to 1456 A.D.<sup>45</sup> He was the acknowledged prophet of Tenkali sect of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism,<sup>46</sup> wrote 'Nṛsiṃhaśatakam' in Sanskrit, praising God Narasimha in eight stanzas.<sup>47</sup>

### **7. Sasta Parāṅkuṣa of Ahōbila Maṭh**

Parāṅkuṣa, was the sixth of the apostolic line of the Ahōbilamaṭh. He is mentioned in an inscription of 1555 A.D. in the

### *Origin and antiquity of the cult of Narasimha*

Ahōbilam Temple.<sup>48</sup> He is said in the ‘Satsamprādaya-muktāvaḥ’ to be a contemporary of king Sadāśiva of Vijayanagara.<sup>49</sup> It is stated that he was the author of a number of works, including ‘Nṛsiṃha Stava’<sup>50</sup> which is the collection of hymns in praise of God Narasimha.

### **The Cult of Narasimha in India in Early and Medieval Periods**

The cult of Narasimha prevailed in India in the early and medieval periods. This is attested by the epigraphic evidence. Sewell enumerates no less than forty kings of the early and medieval periods, who bore the name of Narasimha.<sup>51</sup>

According to D C Sarkar, the fact that the mention of ‘Avatāra’ in the records and ‘Simha’ instead of Narasimha may suggest that the deity was conceived by some as the form of a lion and not as the combined form of man and lion.<sup>52</sup> The patronage of the cult by the Gupta kings is attested by their coins and the sculptures relating to the period. Several copper coins of Rāma Gupta (370 - 375 A D ) depict the lion with upraised tail on one side and the name of Rāma Gupta on the other.<sup>53</sup> The stately lion’s figure resembles those found on several Mālva and Nāga coins and on some clay ceilings from Bāsara and Bhita.<sup>54</sup> Chandra Gupta - II (375-414 A.D.) issued four types of coins with the figure of a lion on each variety.<sup>55</sup> On the coins of the lion trampler type of the illustrious king Kumāra Gupta-I (414-455 A.D.), the circular legend is as follows.<sup>56</sup>

“Saksadiva Narasimha Simha Mahendra Jayatyanisam”,  
“Narasimha as it were incarnate (king) Mahendra (as it were) among the lions, is ever victorious”

The explanation of the king as an incarnation of God Narasimha is obvious. One of the most interesting early representations of the Narasimha incarnation is executed on a seal found at Basarh, datable to the Gupta period.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the coins and seals, there are a number of sculptures of Narasimha, found during the Gupta period. The earliest extant icons of Vishnu incarnations, the Boar, man-lion and Dwarf are assigned to the Gupta period.<sup>58</sup> The Gwalior Museum has also a Narasimha image found at Bēsagar, belonging to the Gupta period.<sup>59</sup>

The contribution of Guptas for the enrichment and propagation of the cult of Narasimha in Northern India is very significant. D.C. Sircar mentions that “the writers on the history of Vaisnavism have succeeded in tracing the mention of the ‘Narasimha Avatāra’ in no inscription earlier than the Alina copper plate record of the Mastraka dynasty of the Vallabī in Kathiawar (Gujarat state), which was issued in the year 766 A.D.”<sup>60</sup>

The Narasimha cult spread in all the directions of the country—North, East, and West. Among the medieval kings of Eastern India, king Lakshmanaśēna is described as ‘Parama Narasimha’ in the epigraphic records of the Sēna dynasty.<sup>61</sup>

In the south, the cult of Narasimha was also popular and it was patronised by a number of ruling dynasties. The Western Chāḷukyas of Bādāmi (Vātapi) were the great builders of temples and patrons of art. The cave No. 3, a Vaishnava cave dated 578 A.D. at Bādāmi in the Bījapūr district of Karnāṭaka, contains a fine<sup>62</sup> relief of Narasimha.

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The earliest known image of Narasimha in Tamil Nadu, is that of a two armed seated figure. The figures are executed in low relief on a slab, found in Munnār of South Arcot district. It is stated that the slab with images, may be assigned to the early Pallava period, i.e., about the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>63</sup> Another representation of the seated two armed Narasimha, along with Lakshmi in the form of Śrīvatsa in padmāsana, on a similar plaque of the same period, is found at Manimangalam in the Chingleput District.<sup>64</sup> Besides king Gunaseela of the Atiyamāṇ or Ādigaimāṇ chiefs, ruling over the northern part of Kongu country in the Southern Tamil Nadu, excavated an extra ordinary cave temple of Lakshmi Narasimha at Namakkal in Salem district some time between 700 and 750 A D<sup>65</sup> The Pallavas of Kāñchipuram occupy a position of considerable importance in the annals of India for their contribution to art and architecture. There is panel in the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchipuram, which depicts the fight between Narasimha and the demon Hiranyakāśipu and it is assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A D<sup>66</sup>

In the South, the Rāstrakūṭas occupy a significant place for their contribution to the cave temples of Ellōra, near Aurangabād in Maharāstra. Cave No. 15 is known as 'Daśavatāra cave' at Ellōra, which contains vigorous sculptures and an inscription, which is in Sanskrit and the letters of about 700-750 A D<sup>67</sup> The cave No 16 of Kailāsanātha temple dating from the later part of 8th to early 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is a magnificent creation.<sup>68</sup> In the Kailāsa cave next to Trivikrama and Siva, the Narasimha panel is carved<sup>69</sup>



The inscriptions of the Cholas throw a flood of light on the temples of Narasimha and the festivals performed therein. An inscription of Rājēndra - I, dated A.D. 1036, mentions the temple of Alagiya Narasimha perumal alias Raja Vinnagar of Ennāyiram and the deity as Śingvēl kunraivār (Narasimha).<sup>70</sup> Another inscription of king Rājēndra-I from the Alagiya Narasimha perumāl temple, refers to an endowment of land made for offerings, festivals, the recitation of Tīruvōymoli and for the maintenance of an institution for higher learning for the teaching of Vēdas, Vyakarana, Mīmāṃsa and Vēdānta.<sup>71</sup>

The gold coin issued by king Narasimha - II (1220-1235 A.D.) depicts God Narasimha seated in *padmasana* posture on one side and in the form of a lion on the other side.<sup>72</sup>

The patronage of the cult of Narasimha by the Western Chālukyas, Hoysalas, Kākātīyas, Reddy Kings and the Vijayanagara Kings is dealt with separately in the third chapter "Growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema".

The impact of the cult of Narasimha may be seen in Kalinga during the later Gāṅga period. It may be of interest to note that the kings, who followed Anaṅga Bhīma - III, came to be called after Vaiṣṇavite gods like Narasimha and Bhānu Dēva. This change is known to have taken place on account of the advent of Narasimha Yati from 1230 A.D.<sup>73</sup> Another prominent figure after Narasimha Yati in Kalinga was that of Narahan Tīrtha, who was the governor of Kalinga and lived in the reign of Narasimha - I (1245-64 A.D.) Bhanudēva - I (1264-79) and Narasimha Dēva - II (1279-1306 A.D.).<sup>74</sup> After the fall of Gangas, the Gajapatis of Orissa continued

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to patronise the cult of Narasimha. This is confirmed by their grants to the Śimhāchalam temple in Visākhapaṭṇam district of Andhra Pradesh.

### **The Cult of Narasimha in Āndhradēśa**

The general history of Narasimha cult in the country has been given in the preceeding pages. Here a brief history of the cult in Āndhradēśa from the earliest times to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A D is attempted with a view to providing the background for the study of the cult from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A D in Rāyalaseema.

The early Bhāgavata religion had incorporated the worship of Vāsudēva-Krishna or Pañchavīras. This has been confirmed by the archaeological sources. During the Sātavāhana period, in the Western Deccan, the prevalence of Bhagavatism is mentioned by the Nānēghaṭ cave inscription of queen Nāgārīka, wife of Satakarni I, the third king of the Sātavāhanās. It begins with an invocation to Sankarshaṇa and Vāsudēva and several other divinities.<sup>75</sup> The most interesting is the more well inscription from Mathara which refers to the establishment of the images of Pañchavīras (Five heroes-Vāsudēva, Sankarshna, Aniruddha, Pradhyumna and Śāmba ) of the Vrishni clan, installed in a temple<sup>76</sup> as early as the first century B.C.<sup>77</sup> This type of worship of Pañchavīras along with Vishnu in the form of Narasimha, became popular in coastal Āndhra during the early part of 4<sup>th</sup> century A D.<sup>78</sup> A rare sculptured panel of Pañchavīras along with Vishnu as Narasimha was found over a hillock in a square shrine of bricks at Koṇḍamōtu on the outskirts of Piḍugurālla village which is nearly 64 kilometers from Guntūr in Andhra Pradesh,<sup>79</sup> This sculpture is now preserved in the office of

the department of Archaeology and Museums at Hyderabad. This panel represents Narasimha and Pañchavīra worship. The central figure of the panel is a lion figure with two human hands and the Male organ is but which denotes holding up of sensual pleasures by being a Yogin. The noteworthy feature of God Narasimha is that the figure is Zoomorphic, excepting the two human hands.<sup>80</sup> This panel shows Narasimha in anthropomorphic form and also in animal form. This is perhaps the first and earliest extant one. Scholars pointed out that stylistically this panel belongs to the late phase of the Ikṣvakas, as is evidenced by the head-gear and drapery ornaments like makarakuṇḍalas, armlets, necklaces.<sup>81</sup> J. N. Benerjea opines that this unique representation of Narasimha is related stylistically to the Nāgārjuna sculptures.<sup>82</sup> It is said that the sculpture bears continuity of the tradition of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa art and can be placed in 3-4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand M. Rama Rao assigned this sculpture to the Vishnukuṇḍin period.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, Āndhra Dēsa had the roots of the cult of Narasimha from Koṇḍarnōti in coastal Āndhra at an early period and from this place it is likely to have spread to the Rāyalaseema and to the South through the Pallavas and the Chālukyas. As regards the Pallavas of the early Sanskrit Charters, they are known to us from their copper plate grants discovered mainly in the Nellore - Guntūr area.<sup>85</sup> It is pointed out that the Pallavas, who in the second century A.D. were subordinates of the Āndhras in the Godavari - Krishna, Delta, succeeded them in rule in the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> centuries and from 600 to 750 A.D. had been the chief power on the east-coast.<sup>86</sup> It appears that the Pallavas were the worshippers of Narasimha as known from

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their very names. We have in early inscriptions names like Simhadatta (Simhadatta, dedicated to the lion or man-lion form of Vishnu) and Siha Rakshita (Simha Rakshita, protected by the Simha or Narasimha - incarnation) in Prakrit inscriptions of first and second century A.D from Sanchi, Mathura and other places<sup>87</sup> In the south, most of the early Pallavas were devotees of Vishnu, in the form of Narasimha, as indicated by their very names. Names like Simhavarman, Simhavishnu and Narasimhavarman were popular kings in the Pallava dynasty of South India.<sup>88</sup> The earliest such name in the family of Pallava kings is that of Simhavarman of Mañchikallu (Guntur Dt., A.P) inscription assignable to the last decade of 3rd century A.D or 290 A.D.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema**

The effect of the cult of Narasimha may be seen in Rāyalaseema. We have a sculptural representation of Narasimha of 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D which comes from Peddamadityam village of Cuddapah District.<sup>90</sup> It is assigned to the Vishnukundin period (5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> A.D.) by M. Rama Rao<sup>91</sup> D C Sircar points out the fact that the 'Avatāra' is often mentioned in early records as 'Simha' instead of Narasimha, may suggest that the deity was once conceived by some in the form of a lion, not the combined form of Man and Lion.<sup>92</sup> In the South, lion was the emblem of the early dynasties of Āndhra Dēśa, the Ikṣvākus, Vishnukundins and the early Chōlas.<sup>93</sup> In the sculptures of Ikṣvākus and later of Vishnukundin period, the lion symbol is prominent and it is found on the seals of the Vishnukundin Charter.<sup>94</sup> Besides coins, the Mogalrajapuram caves of the Vishnukundins have the sculptures of Varāha and the destruction of the demon Hiranyakaśipu by Narasimha. According to Mackenzie reports, there is a shrine of Narasimha within the temple

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of Bhāva Nārāyaṇaśwāmy at Bāpatla of Guntūr district which is assigned to 593 A.D.<sup>95</sup> In the seventh century A.D., a few coins of the Eastern Chāḷukyan kings contain on the obverse the figure of a lion<sup>96</sup>.

Thus, the sculptures, the coins and the temple of Narasimha give us, some information about the cult of Narasimha. The concept of incarnation of Vishnu appears to have been popular in Āndhra Dēśa during the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Vibhava or incarnatory aspect of Vishnu is illustrated by a Dasāvātara panel of 9<sup>th</sup> century presently preserved in the State Museum at Hyderabad<sup>97</sup> A similar panel of Dasāvātāras of the same century from Yēlīśvaram in Nalgonda district, is exhibited in the State Museum at Hyderabad. This panel belongs to the late Pallava period<sup>98</sup>

In the Rāyalaseema region, the antiquity of the cult of Narasimha can be gleaned from a stone plaque found at Peddamuḍiyam village in Cuddapah district. This is the earliest sculpture and in it there is a representation of nine deities including Narasimha, which is third in order from the left and it belongs to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. at the earliest.<sup>99</sup> Sivaramamurti states that this sculpture belongs to the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>100</sup> From 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we have the works of Telugu literature like *Āndhra Mahābhārata* and *Narasimha Purāṇa* which contain information about Narasimha mythology and worship. From 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we also have sufficient epigraphic evidence to trace out the growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

The next chapter 'Chapter Three' will show how the cult of Narasimha had slowly and steadily grown from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

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## GROWTH OF THE CULT OF NARASIMHA IN RĀYALASEEMA

(From 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century A D)

The growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A D is dealt with in this chapter. From 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A D, the cult of Narasimha spread by leaps and bounds. During this period, the cult was patronised by different dynasties that ruled over Rāyalaseema. They were the Western Chālukyas and their feudatories, Hoyasalas, Yādavās, Kākatiyas, Reddis of Kondavīda and Rājahmahēndravaram, the Rāyas of Vijayanagara and their feudatories, the Nandyāla chiefs. In addition to the royal grants made to the temples, there were private grants also given to the temples of Narasimha with a sense of devotion and dedication to the God.

### Western Chālukyas (973 - 1198 A.D.)

The Western Chālukyas had control over parts Cuddapah and Kurnool districts of Rāyalaseema in 11<sup>th</sup> century A D. The earliest record of their reign in the Rāyalaseema region, in connection with the growth of the Narasimha cult, was found in the Narasimha temple at Peddamudiyam in Cuddapah District. It is dated in 1124 A D<sup>1</sup>. It refers itself to the reign of Tribhuvana Malladēva and mentions his feudatory, the Manāmaṇḍalēśwara Chūddanna - Chōla Mahārāja, who is stated to have made a grant of the village Mudiyam to the 'Mahājanas' of the place in the presence of God Narasimha dēva of Ahōbila. During the reign of king Vikramāditya-VI, we have an inscription of Kanduri Gōkarna Chōda Mahārāja (1105-1140)

A.D.), who was feudatory to Vikramāditya-VI. The inscription is dated as 'Saumya', the Telugu year (1129-30 A.D.)<sup>2</sup> which falls in 1129-30 A.D. It registers the provision made for 'navēdya' to Sri Narasimha Dēvara by Keydēva, Daṇḍanāyaka of Mahāmaṇḍalēswara Kandūri Gōkarnadēva Chōḍa Mahānāyaka.<sup>3</sup> The last record of the Western Chāḷukyas belongs to the reign of Bhūlōkamalla Sōmēswara-III, dated in 1137 A.D. It records the gift of the village Badam beyyamgeri as 'Sarvāmaṇya to God Narasimhadēva of Tumbalabīdu Sindavāḍi Paṭṭana by Mahāpradhāna Sēnādhipati Kaḍita, Verggaḍa, for expenses towards the repairs and up-keep of the temple, worship and offerings, perpetual lamps, feeding of the 'Parichāra Brāhmaṇas' etc., in the temple.<sup>4</sup> The village Pedda Tumbalam is in Kurnool District of Rāyalaseema. Thus, during the rule of the Western Chāḷukyas, the cult of Narasimha received patronage in the areas corresponding to the present Cuddāpah and Kurnool Districts in Rāyalaseema.

**Hoyasalas (1100-1342 A.D.) :**

The cult of Narasimha was also popular among the Hoyasalas. An inscription from Jeelavāripalli of Cuddāpah District, dated in 'Raktākshī', the Telugu year which corresponds to 1144-45 A.D. during the reign of King Hoyasala Ballaladēva, registers some gifts to God Vīra Narasimha at the instance of the king by his feudatories.<sup>5</sup>

**Yādavas (1187-1311 A.D.) :**

During the reign of Yādavas, the cult appears to be a prominent one in the Kurnool District. A record of the Yādavas from Chūnna Tumbalam in Kurnool District, dated in 1229 A.D. mentions that one Anantapriya set up the image of God 'Yōgananda Narasimha

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Dēva' to the North tank, situated to the west of the village 'Tumbala' during the reign of king Jaitugi.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Kākatīyas (1000 - 1323 A.D.) :**

Kākatīya Pratāparudra proved his sense of devotion to the Lord of Ahōbīlam. There is an interesting tradition about Pratāparudra (1295-1323) for his veneration to god Ahōbalēśvara of Ahōbīlam in Kumool District. There is a private grant made to the god during this period.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Reddīs of Kondaviḍu: (1325 - 1424 A.D.)**

The Reddīs of Kondaviḍu were sincere devotees of God Narasimha and a number of their liberal grants to the temples supports this view. Prōlaya Vēma Reddy (1324-1353), the founder of this line ruled his kingdom from Addanki. An inscription of 1335 A.D. from Chimakurti, states that he built steps to Ahōbīlam i.e., Upper Ahōbīlam.<sup>8</sup> Another inscription dated in 1345 A.D. from Amarāvati, confirms the noble work done by him.<sup>9</sup> His son Anavēma Reddy followed the father in patronising the cult of Narasimha. He constructed the flight of steps to Ahōbīlam i.e., Upper Ahōbīlam in 1378 A.D.<sup>10</sup> His successor Kumārāgiri Reddy made liberal grants to the temple and strengthened the cult of Narasimha.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Reddys of Rājāmahēndravaram: (1395-1448 A.D.)**

The Reddys of Rājāmahēndravaram were also patrons of art and letters. It seems that they were devotees of Lord Narasimha as known by their grants. 'Katama Reddy Vēmareddy' made gift of the village, Kaluva Cheru, surnamed "Komaragiriapuram" to provide daily offerings to Ahōbaladēvara of Ahōbīlam in 1410 A.D.<sup>12</sup>

**Rāyas of Vijayanagara (1336-1680 A.D) :**

Rāyalaseema was included in the Kingdom of Vijayanagara from the time of its foundation and continued as part of it till the time of it's fall. The Vijayanagara rulers were staunch devotees and upholders of the Hindu 'Dharma'. The period of the rule of Saṅgama, Śāluva, Tuluva and Āravīdu dynasties of Vijayanagara constitutes the most brilliant epoch in the history of Rāyalaseema region and its temples. The Vijayanagara kings were also popular as patrons of art and letters. Their period witnessed considerable growth of the cult of Narasimha and its popularity in Rāyalaseema. From 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D , under the fervent patronisation of the Rāyas, the cult had grown in popularity by leaps and bounds. There are innumerable number of inscriptions which mention the grants made to the temples of Narasimha by the kings, and their feudatories, nobles and others.

**Sangama Dynasty :**

Harihara-II (1377 to 1404 A.D ) was a staunch devotee of Narasimha. He struck coins with the emblem of Lakshmi Narasimha and built a 'Divya Maṇṭapa' for Ahōbīla Śrī Narasimha in 1395 A.D.<sup>13</sup> Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara also shared the patronage of the cult of Narasimha. Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara, Māṇḍalika, Karigaṇḍa, Śrīmatprada, Vodayalu made a provision for the mid-day offering to God Ahōbalavīra Narasimha Dēvara in 1342 A.D.<sup>14</sup>

There are eight grants made to the temple during the reign Bukka-I. The first inscription of his reign states that Mangayadēva, son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara, made a gift of village for providing 'Angaraṇiga Bhōgas' to Vōṇūtala Ahubaladēvara in 1350 A.D.<sup>15</sup>

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The second inscription of his regin, states that one Chalināyaka completed the construction of the *maṇḍapa* of Aubhaladeva temple in Kadiri in the year 1352 A.D.<sup>16</sup> The third inscription of 1353 A.D. states that one Gōpana, an officer, made a gift of an ornament to the temple at Kadiri.<sup>17</sup> The fourth inscription from Patnam of 1367 A.D. mentions the grant of land for food offerings to God Ahōbala Dēva of Kadiri by one Bammināyudu.<sup>18</sup> The fifth inscription registers a provision made for the *Angaraṅga Bhōgas* of Śrī Ahōbala Dēvara of Vōgunutala by Mangayadēva, son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara in the year 1369.<sup>19</sup> The seventh inscription dated in 1375 A.D. records the renovation of a temple dedicated to Yōgānaṇḍa Narasimha Swamy at Gaṇḍikōta.<sup>20</sup> The last record of Bukka-I known from the Gooty Kaṭṭiyat, refers to the consecration of the image of Lakshmi Narasimha on the hill of Gooty.<sup>21</sup> An inscription from Jilavāṇḍalapalle in Cuḍḍapah District, records grant of land to Ahōbala Vīra Narasimha by the subordinates of Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Vīra Ballaladēva Maharāja in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the kings and Mahāmaṇḍalēśwaras were the patrons of the Narasimha temple in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and contributed their mite for the growth of Narasimha cult. - There are two grants made to the temples of Narasimha during the regin of Dēvarāya-II (Prouda Dēvarāya) (1422-1446 A.D.) Mānūri Dēvara granted certain taxes for performing divine service to Narasimhadēva in 1443,<sup>23</sup> and the other record of Dēvarāya's reign, states that a temple for Narasimha was built in the village Bommavaram and a piece of land was given as a gift to the God.<sup>24</sup> There is a solitary grānt during the reign of Mallikārjuna (1447-65 A.D.). Gōpayadēva Mahārāja,



son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Pinnayadēva Mahārāja, made an endowment of the village, Jilēlla for daily 'Navēdya' to Ahōbilēśwara of Ahōbilam.<sup>25</sup>

### **Śāluva Dynasty :**

Śāluva Naraśimha appears to be a great devotee of Lord Narasimha. In the introduction of his work *Rāmābhyudayam*, Śāluva Narasimha states that he was born by the grace of the God Narasimha of Ahōbilam.<sup>26</sup> An inscription of 1485 A.D. records the installation of the image of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy on the pathway over the Sēshādrī Hills leading to Tirumala Hills by Śāluva Narasimha.<sup>27</sup> He also constructed a well with stone steps on the south side of the 'Gōpuram' of the Narasimha temple in 1490 A.D.<sup>28</sup> It is stated that the big 'Gōpuram' of the Narasimha temple was the charitable service of a certain individual during the reign of Narasimha, in 1490 A.D.<sup>29</sup>

### **Tuḷuva Dynasty :**

The cult of Narasimha was on increase during the reign of Tuḷuva dynasty. Krishṇadēvarāya, who was popular as the patron of arts and letters, was a great devotee of Lord Narasimha as known from the charities made to the temples of Narasimha. There are nine grants made to Lord Narasimha of various places during his reign from 1512 A.D. to 1529 A.D. It is stated that the king having started out on a campaign of conquest to Kalinga, visited Ahōbila enroute and made gift of one thousand *varāhas*, a necklace, a ruby and a diamond pendent inset with an emerald, a pair bracelets, and a gold plate to the deity in 1515 A.D. His queen also made a gift of pendent. Further the village Madura was granted for the worship

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and offerings to the God <sup>30</sup> During the reign of Krishṇarāya, Timmarasu Yeṣṛamanāyudu made a grant of land for the *angaranga bhōgas* of Ahōbila Sri Narasimhadēva of Pottipāḍu in the year 1529 A.D.<sup>31</sup> There is another grant of land to God Narasimha of Kadiri by a certain Venkatanāyudu for worship and offerings to the God in 1529 A.D. during the reign of the king.<sup>32</sup> The last record of the king Śrī Krishṇadēvarāya patronising the cult of Lakshmi Narasimha is that of 1529 A.D. from Beḍadūr, which records a gift of land to Ahōbala Sri Narasimhadēva for 'aṅgarangabhōgas' of the Lord.<sup>33</sup>

Achyutarāya (1530-1542 A.D.), the successor of Krishṇadēvarāya, appears to be an ardent devotee of Lord Narasimha. He struck the coins with the emblem of Gaṇḍabhērunda,<sup>34</sup> which is strongly believed to be an aspect of Narasimha. There are a number of grants made to the temples of Narasimha during the reign of Achyutarāya. An inscription of 1532 A.D. records a gift of lands to God Ahōbaleswara of Ahōbīlam by Abbīrāju of Pōrumāmulla.<sup>35</sup> Another grant of similar nature was made in 1533 A.D. for the service of God Ahubaladēva at Chāgalēru by a certain Kampadēvarasa Anna, for the merit of the king.<sup>36</sup> Mahāmaṇḍalēswara Sālaka Rāju Chinna Tirumalayya Dēva Mahārāju, gave a gift of a few acres of wet land to God Maṇḍem Narasimhadēva of Dharmavaram in the year 1533 A.D.<sup>37</sup> Besides, another grant of certain taxes was made to God Aubalēswara of Vōngunūtala in 1534 A.D. by Bacharus, a *Kāryakarta* of the king, who ruled Gaṇḍikōṭaseema.<sup>38</sup> Grants made to the temples for worship and Naivēdya to the God precede the other grants. An epigraph of 1535 A.D. from Ahōbīlam, records some grants to

Vithalam Anantappa by Purushothama Jīyar of the temple for offerings to God of Ahōbīlam on certain occasions.<sup>39</sup> In the year 1538 A.D. during the reign of the king, Rāmachandra Dīkshītula Ayyavāru, ruler of Pāgulla Seema, gifted the village, Kurumāla under his nāyāṅkara to Sri Narasimhadēva of Kadiri for the merit of the king.<sup>40</sup> In the same year Kadirinātha gave a lamp post to God Ahōbala Narasimha.<sup>41</sup> There are also certain grants made to the Lord during the reign of king Achyuta Rāya, but they are undated. Such a grant was that of Tāllapakam Tirumalai Ayyaṅgār, who made a provision for 'Dhanurmāsa pūja' offerings to Sri Narasingaperumāl.<sup>42</sup> Another grant of money was made by Kandāḍai Kumāra Rāmānujāyāṅgār, the manager of gold treasury of Sri Venkatesa, for the occasional offerings to Sri Narasimha and others abiding in Tirupati.<sup>43</sup>

The reign of Sadāśiva is a land mark and an epoch making one in the history of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema, because during this period there were more than fifty grants made to the temples of Lakshmi Narasimha. His officers also shared the contribution for the growth and the popularity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. An inscription from Mādūru, dated in 1544 A.D. records the gift of a village to the Rāmānujakūṭam (Feeding House) at Ahōbīlam by Chinna Timmaṛāja, an officer of the king.<sup>44</sup> The sons and grand sons of the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwaras in their devotion to the Lord Narasimha made a number of grants to the temples. In 1545 A.D. Ahōbalayyadēva Mahārāja, grand-son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Narasimbhulu Śiṅgarayyadēva Mahārāja, gave a gift of land for conducting the 'utsavas' of Lakshmi Narasimha at

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Imakallu.<sup>45</sup> Another epigraph of the same period and the reign records that an endowment of the village Tonḍaladinne was made by the ruler Timmayadēva Mahārāja, son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāmarājugaṇa Kaṇḍarāju for offering cakes to Sri Ahōbila Narasimha Dēva.<sup>46</sup> Karaṇas (village officers) and other petty officers of the king came ahead with grants to be made to the temples with a deep sense of devotion to Lord Narasimha. A record of 1545 A.D. from the Upper Ahōbīlam temple states that Karaṇam Bhūmaruśu made an endowment of land for providing daily offering and other rituals to the Lord of Ahōbīlam.<sup>47</sup>

### **Nandyāla Chiefs :**

The chiefs of Nandyāla family were the devotees of Lord Narasimha. It is stated that the princes of Nandyāla family continued to rule their chief-ship with Nandēla as their capital under the control of the Rāyas of Vijayanagara. Hence their sons and grand sons came to require the family appellation 'Nandēla' i. e., Nandyāla.<sup>48</sup> The Nandyāla chiefs, the feudatories of Vijayanagara were closely associated with the Ahōbīlam temple.

Vēdāntha Śathakōpa Jīyar, the fifth pontiff of (Piṭṭadhipathi) of Ahōbīla Maṭh was said to be the spiritual guru of the chiefs of Nandyāla family.<sup>49</sup> The chiefs, under the influence of the fifth pontiff of Ahōbīla math, made a number of grants with a sense of pious devotion and dedication to Lord Narasimha. It is attested by an inscription of 1545 A.D. which records the gift of income from certain tolls to certain Gōvindayya, the *Sthānapathi* of Ahōbīla Narasimhadēva, for maintaining worship etc., to Lord Narasimha by Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Nandyāla Timmayadēva Mahārāja of

Gaṇḍikōṭa-Rājya.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Nandyāla Chiefs became the devotees of God Narasimha. Besides, Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāghava Rāju granted certain taxes for maintaining lamps to God Aubhalēśwara of Periyavaram in the year 1545 A.D.<sup>51</sup> In the same year Chinna Timmarāju, an officer of King Sadāśiva, granted a village to Ahōbalēśwara.<sup>52</sup> Another Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara, Śrīnātharāja Rāmayyadēva Mahārāja gave a gift of land to the temple of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy in the year 1546 A.D.<sup>53</sup> There is another grant made to the temple of Ahōbila by Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Nandyāla Timmayadēva Mahārāja in 1547 A.D. which records the remission of 'mārga-sunkam' and other taxes on rice, and salt etc., carried in the bullock-carts to Ahōbila from Udayagiri-Seema and Salkiseema for the worship and offerings to the God.<sup>54</sup>

Grants to the temples of Narasimha went on unabated. Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Chenna Kēsavaṛāju made a grant of land for daily offerings to god Narasimha of the village Bommavaram, in the year 1547 A.D.<sup>55</sup> Grants for the maintenance of the temples were common in those days. Timmayadēva Mahārāja son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāmaṛājuḡari Koṇḍaṛāju gave a gift of the village, Tonḍaladinne, for *Abhiśhēkam* to the deity (*Pulikāpu Kainkaryam*) on every Friday and offering of cakes to God Ahōbala Narasimha dēva in the year *Plavaṅga*, during the reign of Sadāśiva,<sup>56</sup> corresponding to A.D. 1547-48. An inscription of 1548 A.D. from Upper Ahōbīlam of the reign of Sadāśiva, records the grant of a village, Jambuladinne for providing six plates of offerings, called 'Srinagara Taḷiga', to God Ahōbīlēśwara by Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Nandyāla China Avubhalayya.<sup>57</sup> Another

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inscription of the same year, records the grant of a village Yaragudi by Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Nārāyaḍēva Mahārāju, the son of Nandēla Naraśingaya dēva Mahārāja, to the God of Ahōbilara.<sup>58</sup> Further, in the year 1549 A.D. Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara, Apratimalladēva Māhārāja made the grant of the village of Kuhuvarara for worship and offerings to God Sri Lakshmi Naraśimha of Tangēda.<sup>59</sup> Nobles and their sons had taken up good service works like raising the gardens, digging tanks and so on. Ahubhalarāju, the son of Timmayadēva Mahārāja, gave a gift of piece of land in the village of Ālamūru in 1550 A.D. for raising a garden with coconut and other trees in favour of the God Ahōbalēśwara.<sup>60</sup>

The Nandyāla chiefs, who were devotees of Lord Naraśimha as mentioned earlier, continued their patronage to the Naraśimha Temples. An inscription of 1550 A.D. records a endowment of land for providing mid-day offering to God Sri Naraśimha of Animēla Konda Śinga, by Timmarāja, the son of Nandyāla Timmayadēva Mahārāja.<sup>61</sup> Another chief of Nandyāla family Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Nandēla Pina - Avubhalēśwaradēva Mahārāja made a grant of land in 1551 A.D. to Vamana Nārāyaṇa Jīyar, probably the priest of Naraśimha temple and the disciple of Saṭagōpa Jīyar, probably the pontiff of Ahōbalarāmath in the presence of God Naraśimha on the bank of the river Pinākiṇi.<sup>62</sup>

There are some private grants made now and then to the Naraśimha temples during the protracted reign of King Sadāśiva. Chinna Basavayya, son of Vīramushti Bhūpayya, made a gift to Sri Naraśimha Dēva of Brāhmaṇamudiyam (Peddamudiyam) in the year 1551 A.D.<sup>63</sup> The Nandyāla chiefs, who were famous for their

patronage of Narasimha cult as mentioned above, continued their unshaken faith and ardent devotion to Lord Narasimha of Ahōbīlam. An epigraph of 1551 A.D. from the Upper Ahōbīlam temple state that Nandyāla Timmarajāyya made an endowment of land for feeding the twelve Sri Vaishnavas daily in the shrine of Nammālvār within the temple of Ahōbalēśwara on 'Nidhi' ('Upper Ahobīlam')<sup>64</sup>, after 'naivēdya' to the Lord.

In the reign of Sadāsiva, certain castes gave gifts to Lord Narasimha for attaining spiritual merit. An inscription of 1552 A.D. records the gift of 'Dommaripannu' (Tax on acrobats) to the God Naraśiṅganātha on the tank-bund of Mōtakatla in Cuddapah District.<sup>65</sup>

We have a number of grants made to the temples of Lakshmi Narasimha, by the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara of King Sadāsiva. An inscription of 1553 A.D. records a gift of land by Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāmarāju Kōnēti China-Tirumaladēva Mahārāju, to God Narasimha of Pennahōbīlam.<sup>66</sup> In the same year, another Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara, Apratikamalla Kuruchēti Venkatādindēva Mahārāju made an endowment in cash for providing the 'Naivēdya' to God on the 'Nidhi' i.e., (Upper Ahōbīlam), when seated in the sixteen pillared 'Maṇḍapa' built by him.<sup>67</sup> Besides, in the year 1554 A.D. Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Jilḷēla Vengalayyadēva Mahārāja re-endowed the village of Narasimhapura to the temple of Lakshmi Narasimha of Nāgarakaḷlu.<sup>68</sup>

Declaration of remission of certain taxes in the temple before the God was in practice during the reign of king Sadāsiva. An inscription of 1556 A.D. records that Kondupa Dēva Mahā Araśu,

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son of Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāma Rāju Appayadēva Mahā Araśu, exempted the Mahājans of certain 'Agrahāras' from certain taxes. The gift was made in the presence of the God Narasimha Swamy of Henne Ahōbala (Pennahōbīlam) on the bank of the river Pinākini.<sup>69</sup>

Grants were also made in the reign of King Sadāsiva for the perpetual maintenance of the temples and conducting the Utsavas on specified occasions for the enjoyment of the Lord. Gaurayya Nāgayya made provision for conducting the *Pāruvēta utsavas* (hunting festival) of Śrī Narasimha at Peḍḍamudiyam in 1557 A.D.<sup>70</sup>, in Cuḍḍapah District. In 1558 A.D. Emberumānār Jīyyamgāru, the *mudrakarta* of Vaṇ Śathagōpa Jīyyam Gāru and others made the grant of the land for conducting certain festivals, when God Ahōbalēśwara was seated in the 16 pillared 'maṇḍapa' at the Nagan. (Hill)<sup>71</sup> The subordinates of the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara also shared in the contribution and patronage of the temples. An inscription of 1559 A.D., records the provision made for the food offerings of the God Penna-Ahōbhalēśwara by a subordinate of the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Rāmarāju Tirumala Rājayyadēva Mahārāju.<sup>72</sup> In the year 1560 A.D. Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Gōburi Allubhala Rājayya made a gift of some plots of land for the service of God Ahābala Narasimha at Būdūru.<sup>73</sup> In the same year, Gōpinātharāju, grand son of the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Bhaṭṭarāju of Jūṭūru, made a provision for the offering to the God Ahōbalēśwara when seated in the four pillared 'maṇḍapa' in the lower Ahōbīlam.<sup>74</sup> Another such a grant was made by Tirumalarāju, an officer of King Sadāsiva, in the year 1561 A.D. for providing worship and offerings to god Ahōbalēśwara.<sup>75</sup> There are five grants of lands made to the two temples of Ahōbīlam in 1563 A.D.<sup>76</sup>



The battle of Tālikōṭa of 1565 A.D. was a disastrous blow to the Vijayanagara Kingdom as the victorious army marched into the capital city looting houses and shops.<sup>77</sup> The city of Vijayanagara never recovered from the fatal blow.<sup>78</sup> Due to the battle of Tālikōṭa, we do not come across inscriptions registering any grants from 1564 A.D. to 1584 A.D. During the reign of King Sadāśiva from 1542 to 1564 A.D. there are a number of grants made to the temples of Narasimha. His reign was favourable for the growth and popularity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

#### **Āravīdu Dynasty :**

There is an interesting epigraph of 1584 A.D. of the reign of Sri Ranga - I.<sup>79</sup> This record mentions in unmistakable terms that the temple of Ahōbīlam was sacked in 1579 A.D. by Ibrahim (Ibrahim Qutub Shah) in alliance with the Hānde chiefs of Anantapur who held it for a short time of six years.<sup>80</sup> The inscription of 1584 A.D. from the Lower Ahōbīlam temple gives an account of how Rangarayādēva of Vijayanagara defeated the vandals and restored the prosperity of the place.<sup>81</sup> During the reign of Venkatarāja - II, the temple again became a popular centre of worship. It is attested by an inscription of 1586 A.D. from the temple, which states that Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Venkatarāju Dēva Chōḍa Mahārāja granted 'eighty 'Varahas' to the temple for maintenance of certain services in the Ahōbīla temple.<sup>82</sup> In this period, the fallen fabric of the rich temple was restored to the former glory renewing the popularity of Narasimha cult. Grants were made at this time to the temples of Narasimha by private persons in their devotion to the lōrd. An inscription of 1590 A.D. records a gift of land for offerings to God

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Prahalāda Varāda (Narasimha) at Diguva Tirupati (Lower Ahōbīlam) by certain Savaram Raṅgappa rāju of Mallappa Chintakuṇṭa<sup>83</sup>. The chiefs also granted lands and villages with a sense of devotion to the Lord. An inscription of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. states that the Vennupāla Sūrananēḍu granted the village of Ainampūḍi to God Narasimhanatha of korlimarla for 'amṛta - paḍi' offerings.<sup>84</sup>

The cult of Narasimha continued to prosper during this period. The last inscription patronising the cult of Narasimha is that of Venkatapatirāya dēva -II dated in 1609 A.D. It records a gift of seven gold - gilt pinnacles (*Kalāsas*) for the *Gōpura* (the tall tower) of Vīra Narasimha temple at lower Ahōbīlam and certain articles to the God by some merchants of Āraṇḍi.<sup>85</sup> This flourishing state of affairs did not continue for a long time. After a decade, during the reign of Rāmadēvarāya, the temple of Ahōbīlam met with an unhappy incident. In the year 1619 A.D. the Muslims again sacked the Ahōbīlam temple and took away the gold plated vāhanas (vehicles of God).<sup>86</sup> This is the last known act of vandalism of the temple by the Muslims. As the Vijayanagar rulers were the staunch devotees of God Vishnu, the cult of Narasimha received a great impetus gaining favour of the general public and grew in popularity and became prominent and attracted the masses to its fold.

### **Private Grants :**

The study of the inscriptions of the Vijayanagara period reveals that private individuals also made grants to the temples of Narasimha. There are nearly fifty grants made to the temples of Nārasimha by private individuals. These range in dates from 1337 A.D. to 1677 A.D. None of them mentions the reign of the kings to which they

belonged. However, they clearly mention the name and place of the donor, the donee, and the purpose of the grant. These grants were made on certain important days for the enjoyment of the Lord. These grants show the devotion of the private individuals hailing from different places and the extent of the cult of Narasimha. The earliest private grant at Tirumala in Chittoor district, mentions the provision made for celebration of a festival in the 'Lakṣmī Narasimha Maṇḍapa' by one Giridēvappa in 1404 A.D.<sup>87</sup>

In 1429 A.D. one Ailaḍo (Jvāla) Aḥōbalanna got polished the garuda *stambha* in the presence of the God.<sup>88</sup> A provision for daily 'Naivēdya' (food offering) to Narasimha Perumal of Srinivāsapuram (a suburb of Tirupati) was made in 1450 A.D. In 1469 A.D.<sup>89</sup> one Kandāḍai, Rāmanujayyanagār made provision for offerings to Sri Alagiya Śingar (Sri Narasimha Swamy) of Tirumala.<sup>90</sup> In 1493 A.D. one Tammayyan provided for offerings to Alagiya Śingar enshrined within the temple of Sri Venkatēswara at Tirumala in Chittoor District.<sup>91</sup>

There are nearly fifteen grants made to the temples by private individuals in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest grant of the 16<sup>th</sup> century states that a certain Dēvāmbika made a gift of land for offerings to God Singēśwara Mahādēva (Narasimha) at Uravakonda in 1503, A.D.<sup>92</sup> in Anantapūr district. A similar provision for offering to Alagiya Śingar of Śrinivāsapuram (near Tirupati) was made by one Tippu Setty in 1507 A.D.<sup>93</sup> In 1508 A.D. Dalavāyi Anantayya made an endowment of land for providing '*aṅgarāga bhōgas*' to God Aḥōbalēswara Lakṣmī Narasimha Mūrti of Pottipāḍu in Cuḍḍapah district<sup>94</sup>. Grants for offerings to the God by private individuals are many. Pappu Setty Ayyan, one of the merchants of

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Tirupati, instituted an offering to God Alagiya Śingar abiding in Śrīnivāsapuram (suburb of Tirupati) in 1512 A.D.<sup>95</sup> In 1529 A.D. a gift was made to the temple of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Kadiri (Anantapūr District) by a merchant from Tadipatri.<sup>96</sup> The temple servants or employees had also made certain grants to the temples. Kandāḍai Kumāra Rāmanujayyengar, the manager of gold treasury of Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala, made an arrangement for offering to Alagiya Śingar (Narasimha) enshrined in Śrīnivāsapuram (suburb of Tirupati) in 1530 A.D.<sup>97</sup> The gifts made to the temples of Narasimha went on in the 17<sup>th</sup> century also. In the series of grants to the Lord, a private grant was made to God Narasimha of Penukoṇḍa (Anantapūr district) in the year 1636 A.D.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, the cult of Narasimha under the patronage of different dynasties that ruled over Rāyalaseema from 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. had made a steady beginning of the growth from 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards and considerable progress was made in 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The cult of Narasimha was popular and prosperous in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and it maintained its status quo in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The different dynasties contributed their mite more or less for the nourishment and popularity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema during the period under study.

### **Association of God Narasimha with Chenchita**

This chapter ends with an interesting account of the association of God Narasimha with a tribal woman Chēnchita, which is a thought-provoking incident in the history of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. One of the aboriginal tribes of the Chēnchus claim that Narasimha is their God, who had married Chēnchita, a girl

belonging to their tribe. It seems that there might be much historical validity in their claim, as Āndhras were mentioned in general along with the tribes in the early Purāṇas, while describing the word 'Āndhras' Aryan invaders first penetrated the jungles of the Deccan, they found them inhabited by black-skinned, small, primitive tribes, who attempted to defend their home-land with all the means at their disposal. The Malids have survived only in small tribes inhabiting the forests of Southern India and the Yānādis in the Nellore district of Āndhra. The most northern group of the Malids are however, the Chēnchus, who inhabit in the Nallamalai Hills in Kurnool district of Rāyalaseema.<sup>99</sup>

Mackenzie, in the local records collected by him, speaks of the Chēnchus as Adī-Chēnchus and Yānādi Chēnchus, the former inhabit in the forest nearby the temple of Narasimha at Ahōbīlam and the latter in the forests, near the temples of Bhārgava Narasimha and Pavana Narasimha.<sup>100</sup> There is another category of the Chenchus, who are known as 'Dāsari Chenchus'. They devote their lives in the service of Lord Narasimha of Ahōbīlam and they embraced 'Vaiṣṇaviam' and became 'dāsas' (servants) to the God.<sup>101</sup>

There are certain legends and traditions which speak of the origin of Chēnchus and the marriage of Chēnchita with God Narasimha. The Chēnchus claim that Chēnchu Lakshmi is their Goddess and they worship God Narasimha, who married her. There is a popular legend which runs as follows:

"Previous to the incarnation of Śrī Krishna in the Dwāparayuga, the Chēnchus were shepherds of the Yerla Golla caste. Ōbal Ēsvara,

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the deity of Ōbālam, a celebrated hill-shrine in the Nallamallas, having taken away and kept as Chēnchita, a maid of the Yerra Golla family, be got upon her children, of whom they are descendants".<sup>102</sup>

There is another legend, which says that God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam married a girl of the Chēnchu. The legend runs as follows:

One day, God Narasimha fell in love with one of the most beautiful Chenchu girls. Even though the God Narasimha took her to his house and called her "Chēnchu Lakshmi" and she lived with the god's own wife, who was called "Ādi Lakshmi", she was very unhappy. And she prayed that in future all Chēnchu girls should be as ugly with crooked noses and ugly eyes and black skin, for if they were born beautiful, the Nawābs, and the Sāhibs and even the Gods would take way.<sup>103</sup>

Edgar Thurston mentions a similar tradition of the Chēnchus.

"The Chēnchus are said (Madras census report 1891) like the Yānādis, to worship a God called "Chenchu Dēvata" to whom offerings of honey and fruits made. They believe that God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam, whom they call 'Ōbūḷesuḍu' carried off a beautiful Chēnchu girl, named "Chēnchita" and married her to prevent the occurrence of a similar fate to other females of the tribes, Chēnchita ordained that they should in future be born ugly and devoid of personal charms. The Chēnchus claim 'Ōbūḷesuḍu' as their brother-in-law and when they go to the temples for annual festival, they carry clothes and presents for the God and Goddess<sup>104</sup> Still the Chēnchus claim that God Narasimha of Ahōbīlam is their brother-in-law and Chēnchita belongs to their tribe. They enjoy certain privileges even now in the temple of Ahōbīlam.

There is another tradition in Sanskrit that if the dwellers of the forest worship God Narasimha, their troubles are minimised and their desires are fulfilled.

“Jale rakṣatu Varāhah, Sthale rakṣatu Vāmanaah,  
Atavyam Narasimhascha, Sarvatah patu Kēśavah”  
(Stōtra Patham - Oral Tradition)

The tribals believe in a world of invisible power which influence human life. Especially the Chēnchus worship God Narasimha and Goddess Chēnchu Lakshmi even now as their family deities

Now let us see the association God Narasimha with Chēnchita in historical perspective Scott's Ferishta describe, Chenchus as appeared before prince Muhammad Masum, a son of Aurangazeb who passed through the Kurnool District in 1694, as exceedingly black, with long hair and heads covered with leaves of trees Each wears unfared arrows and a bow for hunting. They do no harm to any one and live in caves or under the shade of forest trees.<sup>105</sup>

In the temples at Ahōbīlam (Kurnool district) and Peddamuḍiyam (Cuḍḍapah district), we have a sculptural representation of God Narasimha and Chenchita episode There is a sculpture of Narasimha and Chēnchita on one of the four central pillars of mukhamanḍapa of upper Ahōbīlam temple, supposed to have been built by Hari Hara-II of Vijayanagara in 1395 A.D.<sup>106</sup> As such the concept of Chēnchita and Narasimha goes back to 1395 A.D. A similar sculpture can be observed on a pillar in the Ugra Narasimha swamy temple at Peddamuḍiyam in Cuḍḍapah district. Another similar sculpture of Narasimha and Chēnchita is

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found on a pillar in the Raṅgamaṇḍapa of the Narasimha temple at lower Ahōbīlam. This sculpture belongs to the Vijayanagara period on stylistic grounds. Thus, the motif of Chēnchu Lakshmī and Narasimha had been popular in Rāyalaseema from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

In addition to the sculptural evidence of concept of Chēnchita and Narasimha, there is also a literary work belonging to the later part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. which supports the popular concept. The event of the marriage of God Narasimha with a Chēnchu woman of the Nallamalai forest, is the theme of the Sanskrit drama, named “Vāsantika Parinayam”, written by Vaṇ Śaṭṭha gōpa jīyyangār, the seventh pontiff of Ahōbīla math. He appealed to the king Rangarāyadēva (1578-1587 A.D.) of Vijayanagara, at Penukonda, to restore the temple of Ahōbīlam to its original glory by driving away the Muslim army from there <sup>107</sup> It is probable that this Jīyyangar, the seventh head of Ahōbīla math, might have written this Sanskrit drama, to bring back the fallen fabric of the temple and infuse the hearts of the devotees with renewed devotion with vigour.



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## SELECT CENTRES OF WORSHIP OF NARASIMHA IN RĀYALASEEMA

There are eighty eight centres of Narasimha worship in Rāyalaseema, testifying the pōpularity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. There was steady growth in the number of temples and their organisation in Rāyalaseema from 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The centres of Narasimha worship of historical significance in Rāyalaseema can be listed with the help of inscriptions. There are forty four centres referred to in the inscriptions, but many of the centres are not in existence today. In this chapter, six famous centres of Narasimha worship in Rāyalaseema are taken up for study. They are arranged, district-wise, in chronolōgical order as given below.

The following are the important extant centres of Narasimha worship in Rāyalaseema.

S.No.	Name of the Centre	Earliest inscription in A.D.	Taluk & District
1.	Ahōbīlam	1335 A.D. Kurnool Dist.	Ajjagadda Tq., Anantapūr Dist.
2.	Kadiri	1352 A.D.	Kadiri Tq., Anantapūr Dist.
3.	Gutti (Gooty)	14 <sup>th</sup> C.A.D.	Gutti Tq., Anantapūr Dist.
4.	Pennahōbīlam	1553 A.D.	Uravakonda Tq., Anantapūr Dist.
5.	Tirumala	1404 A.D.	Chandragiri Tq., Chittoor Dist.
6.	Peddarnudīyam	1551 A.D.	Jammalamadugu Tq., Cuddapah Dist.

The above six centres of Narasimha worship falling within the time limit of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. continue to be the centres of worship even to this day.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and sketch the general significance of the six Narasimha kshētras in Rāyalaseema of Āndhra Pradesh. Apart from the above stated six centres, a brief account of minor temples of Narasimha is also given in the sequel

### **1. Kurnool District**

In the whole Rāyalaseema region, Kumōol district stands first in the pōpularity of the cult of Narasimha with several temples of historic and religious significance, the chief of them being the Ahōbīlam temple, a great pilgrim centre for Hindus, especially the Srvaishnavites. It is a lēading hight of the Narasimha cult. Let us make a detailed study of the temples of Narasimha, in order of importance from the points of view of legends and traditions, inscriptions, rituals and sculptures.

#### **The Temples of Ahobilam :**

Ahōbīlam, the famous pilgrimage centre for the Srvaishnavites, is about 24 kms. from Ālīlagadda, the Taluk headquarters and 68 kms. from Nandyāl Railway station. It is also known as 'Nava Narasimha Kshētra' or 'Śīngavēl Kunram' in Tamil. The unique feature of Ahōbīlam is that it is the only Narasimha temple where all the nine forms of Lord Narasimha are worshipped with great reverence. The temples of Ahōbīlam can be conveniently divided in to the North and the South wings or the Lower and the Upper Ahōbīlam. The temple of Prahlāda Varada or Narasimha in his



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graceful mood to the boy - devotee Prahlāda is located in Lower Ahōbīlam, also known as Chūnna Ahōbīlam or Diguva Tirupati in Telugu. A distance of eight kms. from this temple leads to the Upper Ahōbīlam on an altitude of 2800 feet M.S.L. The inscriptions refer to it as 'Nīdri' <sup>1</sup> or 'Nagiri' <sup>2</sup> but the Telugu local names are 'Eguva Tirupati and Pēdda Ahōbīlam. The deity of the Upper Ahōbīlam is called Ahōbalēśvara. <sup>3</sup> The legendary importance is that the God had manifested himself in a natural cavern of the rock and is one of the 108 'Divya Tīrthas' (Holy places) in India. According to mythology, the range of Nallamalai hills from Kurnool district to Chittoor district is a personification of Ādisēsha, the Serpent bed of Lord Vishnu, whose tail end is Śrīsaīlam, whose middle is Ahōbīlam and whose head is Tirupati <sup>4</sup>

### **The Temples in Inscriptions and Literature :**

There are about thirty inscriptions in the two temples of Ahōbīlam. Besides, there are about seventeen literary works that make references to Ahōbīlam temples, mostly by poets of the 'Prabandha age'. Out of the seventēen, two are in Sanskrit, namely *Rāmābhyudayam* and *Vāsantika Parinayam* and one in Tamil, *Peria Tirumozhi*. The rest are Telugu Prabandha Kāvyaas, Purāṇas, Śatakams and Yakshagaṇas, all done by Telugu scholars and poets of exceptional merit.

The history of the temples of Ahōbīlam can be gleaned from the following inscriptions.

**Tabular Statement of Inscriptions of Ahōbīlam**

No.	Year A.D.	Donor	Purpose
1.	1335	Konḍaviḍu Reddy King Vēma	Construction of steps in upper Ahōbīlam <sup>5</sup>
2.	1378	Reddy King Anavēma	Building of steps besides to the earlier steps. <sup>6</sup>
3.	1410	Katama Reddy	Gift of Kamāraginpuram for daily offerings to Ahōbaladēvara <sup>7</sup>
4.	1546	Son of Bhūtanātha Bramha Jyōtiṣa	for daily offerings to the deity of Lower Ahō- bīlam (Private grant) <sup>8</sup>
5.	1547	Uggarasayya of Gudiya chēlūru	Offerings to God Vīra Narasimha during festi- vals. <sup>9</sup>
6.	1548	Narasamma, wife of Gouri Vobaya	Vasanta Mandapa to the north of Lower Ahōbīlam. <sup>10</sup>
7.	1574	Appaiah	Daily homage to Sri Ahōbīlēśwara <sup>11</sup>
8.	undated	Sarvadēva Sōma- yājulu of pērūr	Sidhārthi year Kashirābḍhi Nava Narasimha Mandapa (Upper Ahōbīlam) <sup>12</sup>
9.	do	Sadāśiva of Vijaya nagar	Grant of Nālūru village in Podiḷisima for offer- ing to god when seated in the Mandapa. <sup>13</sup>

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10	do	Basayya of Goldsmith	Gift of Hanumanta image. <sup>14</sup>
11	do	Sūrappa ōbalayya dēva Mahārāja.  Number 8 to 11 Lower Ahobilam	Pramādītha year — lower Ahōbilam Garuda Stambha oppo- site to temple, money deposit in temple Treas- ury for offering on 220 festival days in proces- sion occasions. <sup>15</sup>
12	undated	-	List of their for dishes to Sri Bhāshyakāra (Rāmānuja) on 12 days (Tiru Nakshatram) <sup>16</sup>
13.	do	Bhiraraṣṭu servant of Aliyarāmarāya	Homage to the god (shrine of Jvāla Narasimha) <sup>17</sup>
14	do	Narasimha Jīyyan gāru	Mandapa to Jvāla Narasimha. <sup>18</sup>
15.	do	Ramana Rāya Nāyudu	Krōdhi year - gift of Garuda Stambha to deity. <sup>19</sup>
16.	do	Kōnēti Vōbulayya gāru  Numbers 12 to 16 Ahōbilam.	Gift of village Kalluptla for offering to god when seated in Mandapa in Lower Ahobilam. Twice Navēdya, mid- day and evening to the Lord as well as Sri Bhāshyakāra. <sup>20</sup>

**Mythology and Legend of the Ahōbilam temple :**

The Sthalapurāṇa of the temple is narrated as part of the Bramhāṇḍapurāṇa with ten chapters in 1046 ślōkas by Maharshi Vēda Vyāsa.<sup>21</sup> The greatness of Ahobilam as described in the Sthalapurāṇa is given below. This sacred place was the kingdom of Hiranyakaśipu in Kritayuga and Lord Narasimha came out of the pillar in the palace of the demon king. This place was called Vēdāchalam, Garudāchalam and Vīrakshētram.<sup>22</sup> It is also known as Śingavēlkundram. There are two pōpular legends for the derivātion of the word Ahōbilam. According to the first legend, the Dēvas while witnessing the terrific aspect (Ugra Kāla) taken by the deity to tear Hiranyakaśipu to picces, sang His priase as Ahōbala (Lo! The Strength)<sup>23</sup> Hence the place came to be known as Ahōbalam. A prapathi sloka attests to this fact

“Ahōvīryam Ahōsauryam  
Ahōbāhu Parākramah  
Narashimham Param Daivam  
Ahōbilam Ahōbalam”

According to another version, Garuda worshipped and realised the Lord in the great cave Ahōbala<sup>24</sup> and the place came to be called Ahōbila.

It is stated that Bramhaḍēva, Lord Śrī Rāma and Lord Śrīnivāsa of the Seven Hills also worshipped Lord Narasimha.<sup>25</sup> In Tamil Vaishnava tradition,<sup>26</sup> the God is known as ‘Peria Perumāḷ’. It is also stated that Rāma while living in the forest prayed to Narasimha with ‘Pāṇchāmṛita Stōtra’.<sup>27</sup> It is also said that Lord

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Srīnīvasa prayed to Sṛī Narasimha of Ahōbīlam before marrying Padmāvatī<sup>28</sup>

The Sthalapurāṇa of Ahōbīlam in Sanskrit gives an account of nine forms (Nava Narasimhas) of Narasimha worshipped here. They are as follows.

#### **1. Bhārgava Narasimha**

The temple of Bhārgava Narasimha is at a distance of 2 kms. from the Lower Ahōbīlam, on a hill near the sacred pond known as 'Bhārgava Tīrtham'. Here Bhārgava Rāma is said to have performed penance. Hence, the Lord of the temple is known as Bhārgava Narasimha.

#### **2. Yōgānanda Narasimha**

This temple is at a distance of 2 ½ kms. to the south east of Lower Ahōbīlam. The popular legend is that after killing Hiraṇyakaśipu, Lord Narasimha taught Prahlāda several Yogic postures. Hence, the God in this aspect is called Yōgānanda Narasimha.

#### **3. Chatravaṭa Narasimha**

This image of Narasimha is situated at a distance of 3 kms. from Lower Ahōbīlam, under a pipal tree, surrounded by thorny bushes. Therefore, the God is called Chatravaṭa Narasimha.

#### **4. Ahōbīla Narasimha**

This is the main temple and the earliest of all the nine shrines at the place. It is situated on the Upper Ahōbīlam at a distance of 8 kms. from the Lower Ahōbīlam. The God in this temple appears in his fierce aspect called Ugra Narasimha, the presiding deity of the

temple and he is known as Ahōbila Nṛsiṃhaśwāmy. It is firmly believed that Lord Narasimha was Svayambhu (self-manifest) here.

#### **5. Krōḍākāra (Varāha) Narasimha**

About 1 km. from the main temple is the temple of Krōḍākāra Narasimha. The image of the deity has the face of a boar (Varāha or Krōḍa) and the God is seen along with his consort Lakshmi

#### **6. Kāraṇja Narasimha**

This shrine is at a distance of 1 km from the Upper Ahōbīlam and one furlong from the road leading to Lower Ahōbīlam. The image of the deity is installed under a tree called Kāraṇja Vṛkṣham. Therefore, this image is called Kāraṇja Narasimha.

#### **7. Mālōla Narasimha**

This shrine is situated at a distance of 2 kms. from the main temple of Upper Ahōbīlam. The deity in this shrine is in Sowmya (graceful) form. As Lord Narasimha is shown with his consort Lakshmi, he is called 'Mālōla Narasimha'

#### **8. Jvālā Narasimha**

This shrine is on a higher up of the Mālōla Narasimha shrine, on a hill called 'Achalachchaya Mēru' which is about 4 kms. from the Upper Ahōbīlam temple. This place is said to be the actual spot where the fierce anger of the Lord reached its culmination when he tore Hiranyakaśipu.

#### **9. Pāvana Narasimha**

This shrine is nearby the above temple on the bank of the river, Pāvana and it is about 6 kms. from the Upper Ahōbīlam temple.

Apart from the above stated nine shrines of Narasimha, there is a famous shrine dedicated to God in the Lower Ahōbīlam and it is popularly known as 'Prahāda Varada Sannidhi.'

*Select Centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema*

The other attractions of this place are ‘Ugra Sthambham’ and ‘Prahāda Mettu’.

The Sanskrit slōka on Navanarasimhas

“Jvālāhōbila Mālōla

Krōdākāranja Bhārgavah

Yōgānanda Chatravata

Pāvana Navamūrthayē”

is found in the Tāllapaka works (Kīrthana No. 453). In a Saṅkīrtana, Tāllapaka Annamayya describes the Nava Narasimhas as follows.

‘Nava Narasimha Namō Nama

Bhāgavah theera Ahōbila Narasimha

Satata Prātapa Rudra Jvālā Narasimha

Vitata Vīra Simha Vidāraṇa

Atisaya Karuna Yōgananda Narasimha

Mathisaṇṭapu Kanugamanu Narasimha

Mārālī Bībhotsapu Matte Malla Narasimha

Narahari Bhargoti Narasimha

Paṇipūrṇa Śringāra Prahāda Narasimha

Śirula Nādbhutapu Lakshmi Narasimha

Vadana Bhayānakapu Varāha Narasimha

Chēdaram Vaidhavāla Sri Narasimha

Adana Sri Vēṅkatēsa Andu Vividu Vīravāthi

Padhivēla Rūpamula Bāhu Narasimha - - “Nava”.

There is a popular legend about Lord Narasimha which is widely current among the Chēnchus, who are associated with Ahōbīlam. The pōpular legend is that “when Vishnu took on the incārnation of Narasimha, goddess Lakshmi was born in the Chēnchu

Tribe and both were living here happily. On account of this, the god refused to go back to Vaikunṭham also. The love of Lord Narasimha with Chenchita, a tribal woman is famous in many folk songs of the place” The sculptures of Narasimha and Chenchita on the pillars of the temples of Prahlāda Varada at Lower Ahōbīlam and of Ahōbīla Narasimha of Upper Ahōbīlam and the Sanskrit Drama ‘Vāsāntika Parinayam’ lend support to the popular legend of Narasimha and Chenchita.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Temple in Tradition**

The temple tradition is that it has been visited by some famous kings and preachers. The ‘Guru Parampara’ states that the great Śrī Vaishnava preacher, Śrīmad Rāmānujācārya of 11th century visited the temple.<sup>30</sup> The great Western Chalukya king Vikramāditya is said to have worshipped the ‘Mūla viḡraha’ of this temple.<sup>31</sup> The Ahōbīlam Kaṣṭiyat records that, Pratāparudra, the Kākatiya king, made a gift of the idols, renovated the maṇḍapas and arranged for the conduct of the ‘Utsavas’ in the temple of Ahōbāla.<sup>32</sup> One tradition says that when Pratāparudra wanted to cast a gold Śiva Linga on return from Śrīsaīlam, the figure of Narasimha only emerged and he was directed to worship of the Lord of Ahōbīlam in his dream. The king had endowed lands for the maintenance of temple and rituals and also gifted valuable ornaments to the Lord.<sup>33</sup> It is stated that Prōlaya Vēma Reddy (1324 - 1353 A.D.), the founder of the Redḡi Kingdom of Kondaviḡu, is said to have built a *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* with 64 pillars, rich in ārchitecture.<sup>34</sup> According to the tradition, Chaitanya (Gaurayaswamy) visited the shrine of Narasimha at Ahōbīlam in 1513 A.D.<sup>35</sup>



## **History of The Ahōbila Math**

After the death of the great Vaishnava scholar Vēdānta Dēśika in 1370 A.D., the mantle of the Āchārya fell on his son, Varada Āchārya. Śrī Ādivan Śathakōpa Yatīndra Mahādēśika was the founder of the Ahōbila Math. One Śrīnīvasa Āchārya, a great sēholar was directed by the Lord, to came to Ahōbīlam. The Lord initiated him with 'Presha Mantra' and bestōwed 'Sanyasa Āshrama' on him and named him as 'Satha Kōpa Jīyar'.<sup>36</sup> He was also directed to take out the Utsava idol from temple to temple to all parts of India. In a trance, the Sanyāsī got the Mālōla Narasimha Swamy Utsava Mūrti which was carried by him from place to place in his religious tour on foot. The king arranged for daily 'Ārādanas' at the Ahōbīlam temple. Since that time, the temple is under the management of Ahōbila Math.<sup>37</sup> The founder of the math made visit to Orissa, on the Tirumala Hill, he established Van Śathakōpa Math.<sup>38</sup> He also established a chain of monasteries.<sup>39</sup>

The Ahōbīlam math was the great nerve - centre of Śrīvaishnavism in Rāyalaseema. 'Sathakōpa Jīyar was the fifth pontiff of the Math and also spiritual preceptor of Nandyāla chiefs.<sup>40</sup> The 1555 A.D. epigraph mentions that Sāshta Parāṅkuśa was the trustee of the Ahōbila temple. The Āchārya authored many a work including Narasimhōstava. The tradition concludes with the disappearance of the Āchārya in the cave of Ahōbīlam temple and also for his drāma 'Vāsantika Parīṇayam'.<sup>41</sup> The thēme of the drāma is the marriage of God Narasimha with a woman of Chēnchu tribe.

### **The Temples of Ahōbīlam**

There are two important temples at Ahōbīlam, viz., (1) Prahlāda Varada Swamy in the Lower Ahōbīlam and (2) Ahōbīla Narasimha Swamy on the Upper Ahōbīlam which is earlier than the first one.

#### **(1) The Temple of Prahlāda Varada of Lower Ahōbīlam**

The Lower Ahōbīlam temple has three prākāras. The presiding deity is called 'Prahlāda Varada Swamy'. In the courtyard of the temple there is a shrine dedicated to Śrī Venkateswara to the south west and the mukhamanḍapa is being used as the kalyāṇamanḍapa for the deity. The temple consists of a sanctum, mukhamanḍapa and raṅgamanḍapa with rich sculptures on the pillars. To the left of the principal deity, the 'Utsava' (processional) idols of Pāvana Narasimha are installed. A small copper idol of the Jīyar, the founder of the Ahōbīla Māth is kept before the Utsava idols.

#### **(2) The Temple of Ahōbīla Narasimha Swamy of Upper Ahōbīlam**

The Upper Ahōbīlam temple is dedicated to Ahōbīla Narasimha Swamy. The Lord is said to be 'Svayambhu' (self-manifest) in a rock cavern. The temple consist of the sanctum (in cavern shape) and the shrines of Śrīva and Narasimha, Sudarśana and of Chēnchu Lakshmi<sup>42</sup>. The maṇḍapas of the temple display rich art and architecture.

A small river, 'Bhavanāśini' flows to the east of the temple. There are the idols of the Chēnchu women, Chenchita and Lakshmi in different places. The Utsava idols of the temple are installed in the Lower Ahōbīlam temple. The Dhruvabēra of the temple is popularly known as 'Ahōbala Narasimha Swamy'.

### **Impact of Ahōbīlam**

The extent of influence of Ahōbīlam may be assessed from that it spread to other parts of Rāyalaseema from 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards. An inscription of 1124 A.D. from Peddamudiyaṁ in Cuḍḍapah district refers to a grant of village Mudivēmu to the Mahājanas of that place in the presence of God Narasimha of that place. In the same district, we have two inscriptions from Koṇḍa Sunkēsula in 14<sup>th</sup> C A.D. An inscription of 1342 A.D. from the temple of Narasimha, mentions the God of that place as Ahōbalanātha dēvara<sup>43</sup> and another record of 1334 A.D. from the same place, records a gift to God Ahōbala Narasimha.<sup>44</sup> Of the same century in the same district, two inscriptions of 1350<sup>45</sup> and 1369 A.D.<sup>46</sup> refer to God as Avubala dēvara and Ahōbala dēvara of Vōnūtula and Vōgunūtula villages respectively. It can be seen from an inscription of 1352 A.D. from the temple of Narasimha at Kadiri in Anantapūr district, that the God of that place was known as Aubaladēvara.<sup>47</sup> Thus, we find the name of Ahōbala to the deity in Cuḍḍapah and Anantapūr districts, after the name of the God of Ahōbīlam in Kurnool district from 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Since then, a number of persons bear the name of Ahobala after the God of Ahōbīlam.

### **Minor Temples of Narasimha in Kurnool District**

Besides the temples of Ahōbīlam, there are a few minor temples of Narasimha in Kurnool district testifying the prevalence of the cult of Narasimha in this part of Rāyalaseema. The minor shrines of Narasimha are found in the following places of Kurnool district.

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Annasamudram     | 9. Yādavavāda        |
| 2. Muṇḍlapāḍu       | 10. Kurukunṭṭa       |
| 3. Raṅgāpuram       | 11. Rāmānṛtham       |
| 4. Narasāpuram      | 12. Uppalapāḍu       |
| 5. Tīmmanayanipalle | 13. Kolimigunḍa      |
| 6. Ālamūru          | 14. Sarvēpalle       |
| 7. Būdūru           | 15. Peddajaribūlam   |
| 8. R. Krishnāpuram  | 16. Chinna Jaribūlam |

Of the above stated sixteen minor centres of Narasimha worship, a brief account of six places is given here.

### **1. The Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy Temple at Annasamudram**

It is about 30 miles from Mārkapur town on the way to Vinukonḍa, and has the Narasimha shrine on a hill. A hill stream 'Konḍalam' washes the foot of the hill. The image of the deity at this place is 3 feet high with a lion's head.

### **2. Muṇḍlapāḍu**

This place is about 69 kms from Giddalūru on the Giddalūru-Cuḍḍapah road, originally known as 'Munula Puri' (the place of sages) under the rule of the pālegārs. The chief temple is that of Bhavāni Śaṅkara Swāmy with the image of Narasimha.

### **3. Raṅgāpuram**

This village is about 4 miles from Raṅgāpuram railway station. The deity in this place is called 'Maddulēṭi Swāmy'. According to a local legend, the god fulfilled the desire of His woman-devotee, Chinnamma to appear there as Madduleti Narasimha Swamy and stay till the end of Kaliyuga to fulfil the desires of all his devotees.

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Belief goes that if the offered flowers slide down the deity, their wishes are negated.

#### **4. Narasāpuram**

The Narasimha Swamy temple of this place is located at a distance of 8 miles from Ahōbilam and 5 miles from Āḷagaḍḍa. The historical aspect of the place is that it was visited by the Kākatiya king Pratāpa Rudra in one of his hunting expeditions, and was selected for the construction of Narasimha temple.

#### **5. Thimmanāyanipalle**

This is a hamlet of Narasāpuram, about 7 miles from Āḷagaḍḍa. It is learnt that Thimmaruṣu, the Mahāmātri of Sri Krishna Dēvarāya, while returning to Vijayanagara after his hunting expedition in Nallamala forest, visited the Ahōbilam temple. To thank the villagers who quenched his thirst with the sweet water of the Palmyra fruit in the hot Sun, he agreed to contribute the expenditure for the construction of the Narasimha temple at this village from the royal treasury. The villagers named the village after the name of the Prime Minister. The Pāruvēṭa Utsavam (Hunting Festival) of Narasimha Swamy is a very ancient festival here commemorating the marriage of Lord Narasimha with Chēnchu Lakshmī.

#### **6. Ālamūru**

The temple of Ālamūru is about 6 miles from Āḷagaḍḍa. It has a bronze image of Sri Narasimha Swamy. In addition to the six minor temples mentioned above, there are also a few minor shrines of Narasimha at places like Krishnāpuram, Yādavavāda, Kunukunṭala and Uppalapāḍu, all in Kurnool district of Rāyalaseema. Information regarding these places is scanty

## **2. Anantapūr District:**

### **1. The Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple, Kadiri.**

Kadiri is a municipal town, about 89 kms from the District headquarters of Anantapūr on the Pākāla - Dharmavaram metre gauge section of South Central Railway. Kadiri comes only next to Ahōbīlam in the line of Narasimha temples. A lot of material, both literary and archaeological is available to facilitate the study of the temple. The name of the town can be traced in the three ways. Firstly it can be split into two words, 'Kha' meaning 'the foot of Vishnu' and 'Adri' meaning a 'Hill'. It thus means a place with a hill representing the feet of Vishnu. The second meaning is 'Khadri' is a type of wood of which the deity is made. So goes the name of the town also. Thirdly, the place was a Jungle full of "Khadira" trees (Acacia Cathechu), under which the idol of the deity is said to have been originally found.

#### **The History of the Temple :**

The history of the temple can be known from about 15 inscriptions which range in dates from 1352 A.D. to 1529 A.D. These inscriptions, the Sthalapurāna of the temple, other literary works, legends and traditions give information about the history of the temple. The earliest inscription is of 1352 A.D. It mentions that during the reign of Bukkanaoḍeya, Pandima Sannāyini Chelmāyaka completed the construction of the mandapa of the temple, then known as Aubhaladēva temple<sup>48</sup>. The Rāyas of Vijayanagara greatly patronised the temple. Bukka Rāya - I was a devotee of god Narasimha.

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The second inscription of 1353 A.D.<sup>49</sup> records the gift of an ornament to the God by one Gōpana, an officer of Kamāra II, son of Bukka I.<sup>50</sup> The other record of Bukka dated 1367 A.D.<sup>51</sup> states that Rammi Nāyudu made a grant of one *putti* of land for food offerings to god Ahōbaladēva of Kadiri. There are two inscriptions of the reign of Dēvarāya - I, dated in 1418 A.D. The first inscription confirms the exemption granted to the Pārichalās by king Hanhara from certain taxes.<sup>52</sup>

The second inscription states that the king sitting in the mukhamandapa of the temple, made an enquiry in a dispute between the Mālas, Mādagas and the Ryots and took a decision.<sup>53</sup>

An inscription of 1458 A.D.<sup>54</sup> records the gift of land to the *Rāmānujakūtam* in the temple, while another of 1469 A.D.<sup>55</sup> records the gift of a pillar, during the reigns of Mallikārjuna Raya (1447-1465 A.D.) and Virūpāksha Rāya II (1465-1485 A.D.) respectively.

The reign of Sri Krishna Dēvarāya is an epoch making one in the history of the temples of Rāyalaseema. He patronised a number of temples. An inscription of 1512 A.D.<sup>56</sup> from Uppaḍihalli, states that one Ellayya, a servant of Krishṇadēvarāya, made a gift of the Uppaḍihalli village for the service of Ahōbala Narasimha. Another inscription of 1529 A.D. records a gift of land to the God Narasimha of Kadiri by Venkaṭanāyudu, a relation of the king, for worship and offering to the God.<sup>57</sup>

There are some undated records also which furnish information about the temple. One record registers the building of a *gōpura*<sup>58</sup> by a certain Viṭhalāmātya. Another inscription at the foot

of Narasimha koṇḍa, east of Kadiri, records the gift of garden in the Telugu year Sarvadhari<sup>59</sup>

Inscriptions of 1356 A.D. 1384 A.D. and 1579 A.D. are found in the temple of Narasimha at Kadiri. These are not published in the epigraphic works. An inscription of 1356 A.D. states that the Kokkanṭi Pālēgār did the construction of the western *gōpura* of the temple. Similarly the inscription of 1384 A.D. says that a women devotee, Chinnamma by name constructed the northern *gōpura*. The constructions of the eastern *gōpura* is referred to in an inscription of Harihara rāya. During his travel from Penugonda to Chandragiri, he introduced Harijan entry into the temple for a single day, next to the Brahmōtsavam celebration<sup>60</sup>. The construction of the Vasantōsava - maṇḍapam by the pālegar of Tāḍipatṛi is referred to in the inscription of 1529 A.D. In 1579 A.D., Koṇḍamanāyudu, pālēgar of Paṭṇam, gifted a *Shrōtriya*m village to the temple called after his name as Koṇḍamanāyanupālem.

### **The Temple in Legends and Literature :**

The sanctity and greatness of the Lakshmi Narasimha temple are vividly described in *Khadri Sthalapurānam*, which was published by the temple authorities. It contains 767 Ślōkas and divided into 13 chapters, giving fuller details of the temple.<sup>61</sup> It is said that God Narasimha with his sharp claws, tore the belly of HiranyaKāśipa at Narasimhakōṇḍa and manifested Himself in the present town. The legend further says that 'Utsavamūrthis' were delivered by Lord Narasimha Himself to Bhṛigu Maharshi in a "Peṭika" (Box) for his daily worship. The *Sthalapurānam* refers to the God by the name of 'Vasanta Vallabhulu, or Vasantha Mādhavulu'.<sup>62</sup>



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According to another legend, sage Vēdavyāsa, without the knowledge of the Āsuras, imparted lessons to disciples and the place called Kēdaranyam, Another version is that the local hill called Stōtrādri is the place where the Dēvas worshipped the 'God' after he killed the demon Hiranyakaśipu.<sup>63</sup>

#### **The Literary Base of the Temple**

The Tāllapāka singer - poets<sup>64</sup> (1408-1547 A.D.) sang the glory of Kadiri Lakshmī Narasimha Swamy temple as one of the 'NAVA NARASIMHA KSHĒTRAS'<sup>65</sup> Their composition is as follows:

'Nava Mūrthy Lānatṭi Narasimhamu Vēde  
Nava Maina Sri Kadiri Narasimhamu.'

It is also said that 'Kshētrayya', (1600-1680 A.D.) another singer poet paid a visit to the Kadiri shrine.

#### **The Temple Complex :**

The temple of Kadiri, popular called 'Lakshmī Narasimha Swamy' is situated inside a 500sq feet high walled compound with four entrances with a *gōpura* on each them. The main entrance is in the east. On the axis, the temple consists of a *Sanctum* (*Garbhagriha*), *antarāḷa*, *mukhamandapa* connecting *mandapa* and *mahāmandapa*. Within the temple, there are small shrines of uts idols, Lakshmī, Namnālvar, Rāmānuja and Vēdānta Dēśika. There is also a small shrine to Hanuman in the compound. The presiding deity of the temple is 'Vidārana Narasimha'. The sanctum houses the metal images of Narasimha Swamy and Lakshmī. The processional images of the temple are housed in a separate room of the temple. The Lakshmī Narasimhaswamy temple of Kadiri is a

good specimen of the early Vijayanagara architecture, about 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D

## **2. The Temple of Lakshmī Narasimha at Guttī:**

Gutty or Gooty is 51 kms from Anantapūr and 29 kms from Guntakal. The temple of Narasimha is located on a hill with a fort<sup>66</sup> which is in ruins. The temple and the tank below were constructed by king Bukka ( 1344- 1377A D ) as per the directions of the God Narasimha who appeared in a dream to the King. 'Gooty' is the English corrupt form of 'Guttī' <sup>67</sup>, the Indian name of the fort and village. We have no foundation inscription about the exact date of construction of the temple.

The History of the temple starts from the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. <sup>68</sup> On a rock near the temple is an inscription of 14<sup>th</sup> century in Kannaḍa language, which praises the glory of Lakshmī Narasimha. From the rock inscription, found at the fort of Guttī, it is known that the fort (Guttī durga) belonged to king Bukka. <sup>69</sup> ( 1344-77 A.D.)

The temple of Lakshmī Narasimha Swamy is located on a lower fringe of the hill, and consists of a *sanctum sanctorum*, *antarāḷa* and *mukhamanḍapa*. The image of the deity bears the usual form found in other places, and it was consecrated by king Bukkarāya of Vijayanagara who had a fancy for building works on hills in the empire.

## **1. The Lakshmī Narasimha Swamy at Penna Ahobilam :**

The Lakshmī Narasimha Swamy temple of Penna Ahobilam is located at a distance of about 12kms to the east of Uravakonda and 40kms from Anantapūr. The temple is on the top of hillock 1360 ft. above the sea level. It can be reached by the flight of steps.

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It is said that the Lord has set one foot here in his travel round the earth after killing Hiranyakaśipu at Ahōbīlam.<sup>70</sup> According to a legend, at the southern end of the foot-print, there is a cave-like hollow point in which sage Uddālaka did penance.<sup>71</sup> Hence the name Pennahobīlam, also known as Henna - Ahōbīla or Pinnahōbīlam (Chinna Ahōbīlam).

### **Inscriptions :**

The history of the temple dates back to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There are three inscriptions of the reign of Sadāśivarāya of Vijayanagara in the temple. The earliest record is of 1553 A.D. It records a gift of land by Mahāmandalēśwara Rāmarāja Kōnēti Chinna Tirumala Dēva Mahārāju.<sup>72</sup> The second record of 1556 A.D. records the remission of taxes on certain Agrahāram villages lying in the Uravakondasīma.<sup>73</sup> The third record of 1559 A.D. mentions the provision made for food offerings to the God Pennahubhalēśwara by a subōrdinate of the king.<sup>74</sup> Besides, there are two undated epigraphs. The first of them records the construction of 'Thediddi Bagalu' (narrow gateway) on the South by one Jōgināyaka and the other states that one Venkaṭādrī Nāyaka paid respects to the God<sup>75</sup>.

### **The Temple in Legends and Traditions :**

There is a popular legend relating to the foundation of the temple. A cowherd boy revealed to his master at Gollapalli at the foot of the temple that master's cow did not yield milk. One night the Lord told the ryot in his dream that He resided in an out-hill on the hillock and that the cow was feeding him with her milk. As per the dream, the image of the Lord was traced in an ant-hill and it was

worshipped with great devōtion. As the residents of the village were all cow-herds, the house wives used to get up early in the morning and commence churing. It is said that the churing noise of the house wives brought the wrath of the Lord who cursed the village to go into ruins.<sup>76</sup> Hence there is no village today nearby the temple.

Another legend says that the Lord hunted wild boars in the locality. To satisfy the sage Uddālaka, the Lord set his right foot - print in the temple, while the left - foot - print is at the temple in Ahōbīlam of Kurnool District.<sup>77</sup> Still there are the foot-prints of a boar and the Lord at the place. Another legend narrates the marriage of Lord Narasimha with a Chēnchu girl. This marriage is celebrated every year on the Rathasaptamī day in the temple, while the Lord's marriage with Mahālakshmi at the base of the hillock is celebrated every year during the Brahmōtsavam festival in the month of *Vaiśākha*

This is a tradition regarding the temple which is popular among the people, but it is lacking historical evidence. It is said that in 900 A.D. Rājarājachōla of Chōla dynasty impressed by the locality, constructed a temple over the foot print of the Lord, a big compound and *Dvaja - Stambham*. The tradition further says that the temple constructed by Rājarāja was rebuilt, compound was repaired, four gōpuras were erected on four sides, a road for temple car was laid and the village Pennahōbīlam along with 3000 acres of land was assigned to the temple by Āravīṭi Rāmarāju, pōpularly known as Aḷiya Rāmarāju, son - in - law of Sri Krishna Dēva Rāya. Another local tradition is that the temple of Lakshmi Dēvi was built by Sadāsiva Raya of Vijayanagara. This is supported by a sculpture of a man

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and women supposed to be king and his Queen at the eastern entrance standing with folded hands facing the Lord. Thus, these legends furnish us some information about the temple of Pennahōbīlam its antiquity and pōpularity.

### **The Temple Complex**

The temple of Lakshmi Narasimha is on the hillock. It consists of the Sanctum and *antarāla*, surrounded by a *pradakshina* connecting *maṇḍapa* and *mahāmaṇḍapa*. In the *maṇḍapa* there is a shrine for the 'Ālvars' facing the south. In the courtyard is a small shrine dedicated to Lord Chēnna Kēsava Śwāmy, facing the south. In the south-east of the temple, there is a *kalyānamāṇḍapa* with beautiful sculptures on the pillars. There is the Mahālakshmi temple at the foot of the hillock, to the east of the temple. Near the eastern entrance lies a small shrine of Āṇjanēya and near the western entrance lies the Śiva Temple.

The sanctum of the temple houses the presiding deity, Lakshmi Narasimha Śwāmy. In front of the deity is a small pit, one foot-deep in which it is believed, there is the right foot print (1 ½ x 1) of the Lord, facing his toes to the north. There is a hollow at the southern end of the foot - print. It is said that water poured in to it, does not overflow, whatever be the quantity. The *mukhamāṇḍapa* and the *vimāna* on the sanctum were renovated in 1981. The procession - idols are found installed four kms away from Penna Ahobīlam in the village temple of Āmidāla.<sup>78</sup>

### **Minor Temples of Narasimha in Anantapūr District :**

The minor temples of Narasimha are found in the following places of Anantapūr District.

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Yeṛa Bommanahalli | 19. Uravakoṇḍa         |
| 2. Yeḷlanūru         | 20. Hiraya Dhalivati   |
| 3. Daḍithōta         | 21. Kotha Chinthakunṭa |
| 4. Bēḍadūr           | 22. Nāgarikallu        |
| 5. Jambulapādu       | 23. Pāmidi             |
| 6. Bhaktara Halli    | 24. Penugonḍa          |
| 7. Bōreddipalle      | 25. Yaḍlapalli         |
| 8. Śāsana Kōṭa       | 26. Pennanūru          |
| 9. Rōḷla             | 27. Śalakam Cheruvu    |
| 10. Sōmagatta        | 28. Kuṇḍurpi           |
| 11. Chilamathūr      | 29. Rāllagunta         |
| 12. Uddihalli        | 30. Koḍikoṇḍa          |
| 13. Chāgalēru        | 31. Enumalavāṇḍlapalli |
| 14. Jambulapālem     | 32. Ōbuladēvarapalli   |
| 15. Dharmavaram      | 33. Āruidāla           |
| 16. Bukkapatnam      | 34. Pennār and         |
| 17. Nāga Samudram    | 35. Jūtūr.             |
| 18. Gōnipēṭa         |                        |

Most of these minor temples in the above stated places are in dilapidated condition.

A brief account of some of the minor temples of Narasimha is given below. These temples enable us to state that the cult of Narasimha has been quite popular in Anantapūr district of Rāyalaseema during the medieval period.

#### **The Lakṣmī Narasimha Śwāmy Temple at Sōmagatta :**

This village is about 23 miles to the east of Hīṇḍūpūr and nearly 4 ½ miles from Koḍikoṇḍa, on Anantapūr bus route. The

temple of Śrī Lakṣmī Narasimhaśwāmy is on the hillock to the east of the village. A copper plate inscription dated S. 1415 (1493 A.D.) refers to its construction by one Ōbul Reddy. The temple of Sōmagatṭa consists of *mahāmaṇḍapa*, *mukhamaṇḍapa*, *āntarāla* and *garbhagṛha* with a circumambulatory passage around it.

### **Jambulapādu**

Jambulapādu is one mile from the Cuḍḍapah - Bellāry road and 5 miles from Tāḍpatṛi Railway station. There is a pillar erected on a pial in the village. This pillar is a personification of the deity Narasimha Śwamy. He is called by different names as “Śthambha Narasimha” (Śthambha in Telugu means Pillar)”, Jvāla Narasimha and Girjā Narasimha. A sheet in the form of a lion’s face is attached to the pillar and worshiped. The pillar of Narasimha which is of nearly 15 feet high is worshiped as a family deity. It is believed that Sri Narasimha appeared in a dream and ordained that a temple was to be raised to him in a day. No one undertook to do this as it was an impossible task.

### **Bhaktarahalli**

Bhaktara Haḷḷi is situated at Harēsamudram near Hiṇḍupūr Railway station. It is said that the image of Śrī Lakṣmī Narasimha in this village was installed by the sage Vyāsa during his travel from North to South.

The temple of this place consists of a Garuda shrine, *mahāmaṇḍapa*, *mukhamaṇḍapa*, *antarāla* and *garbhagṛha*. A few inscriptions at the place, mostly fragmentary, refer to Śālakarājartīya, Tirumalarājamahārāja and Śrīraṅgaāyadēva.

### **Bukkapatnam**

This village, is situated at a distance of about 18 miles north-east of Penukonda on the eastern bank of 'Chitrāvati' river at the foot of the Mallappa Konda range of hills. From the Vijayanagara rulers, it passed on to the Hāṇḍe Nāyaks of Bukkarāyasamudram. Traces of old fortifications can still be seen at the village. The hillocks surround the lake. There is an Ahōbalāśwāmy temple at this village.

### **3. Chittoor District :**

In Chittoor district, there are a few shrines of Narasimha. They are found at Tirumala, Tarigonda, Kapilātīrtham, Pāpēpalli, Kothavāripalle, Kondamari, Śrīmāvasapuram, Tirumala, Reddipalle, Chintamākulapalle, Kalikiri, Dēvalampēta, Mēdikurti and Perumāllapalle. These temples testify the fact that the cult of Narasimha was also popular in Chittoor district, the southernmost district of Rāyalaseema.

A brief account of some of the important shrines of Narasimha is given below.

#### **1. Yōga Narasimha Shrine in the Tirumala Temple :**

The Yōga Narasimha shrine is in the Tirumala temple which is at an altitude of 2900 feet M S.L. and about 22 kms from Tirupati town. It is located in the vimāna pradakshina to the north-east of the main shrine of Sri Vēṅkateswara.

#### **Inscriptions**

There are six inscriptions relating to the shrine. There is no foundation inscription. The earliest epigraph is that of 1404 A.D., refers to the construction of the Lakṣmī Narasimha maṇḍapa and the laying out of a flower garden.<sup>79</sup> Another inscription records an



### *Select Centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema*

undertaking by the *Sthānattār* in Tirumala to one Giridēvappa for celebrating the seventh day festival in the Narasimha *maṇḍapa* and the *Tiruvōlakkach churappu* during the summer festival in lieu of having received 600 paṇam<sup>80</sup>. An inscription of 1469 A.D. in the first *prākāra* in the Venkateswara temple, mentions the provision made by Kandāḍai Rāmānujāyāṅgār, for offerings to Alagiya Singar (Sri Narasimha Swamy) and an '*Akhaṇḍadeepam*' for the Lord.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, the 1493 A.D. inscription in the second *prākāra* of the temple, refers to a cash-endowment by one Tarimayyan to propitiate Alagiya Singar during the *Tiruppallieluchchi* and on festival days like Śrī Rāma Navami.<sup>82</sup> There are two inscriptions of the reign of Achyutarāya. The first one records the provision made by one Tālpākkam Tirumalai Ayyāṅgār towards the expenses of offerings for *Dhanurmāsa pūja* to Narasimha Perumāl.<sup>83</sup> The second one of 1539 A.D. mentions the arrangements made by Alavakōyil Tiruvēnkaṭa Ayyan for the daily offerings of one *Nāyaka Taḷigai* (food offering) to Narasimha on certain days.<sup>84</sup> The last epigraph of Narasimha shrine dated in 1542 A.D. states that provision was made by one kōyil kelvi jīyar for certain offerings to be made on prescribed days to Narasimha.<sup>85</sup> It is clear from the inscriptions that Narasimha was worshipped with flowers daily as part of *Shadōpachāras* (16 types of service) which is continued till date. This shrine of Narasimha flourished during 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### **The Shrine of Yōga Narasimha**

It is situated to the north - east of the *vimāna pradakshina* of the main temple of Sri Venkateswara in Tirumala. The shrine consists of the *garbhagriha*, *aṅtarāḷa* and *mukhamaṇḍapa* with a pillared corridor on the north, east and the south.

## **2. The Temple of LakshmīNarasimha at Tarigoṇḍa:**

The LakshmīNarasimha Swamy at Tarigonda is very famous in the region because of the oath - taking on the Lord to speak the truth in any dispute. People do not speak falsehood on taking oath in the presence of Narasimha Swamy. It consists of the usual structural design of the *sanctum*, *aṅṅārāḷa* and which contains *mukhaṁḍapa* interesting sculptures.

## **3. The LakshmīNarasimha Shrine at Kapilātīrtam:**

Kapilātīrtam is situated at a distance of about three kilometers to the north of the Tirupati town, at the foot of the Tirumala hills with a picturesque water falls known as kapilātīrtam. According to puranic tradition, sage Kapila installed the Śiva linga here and the Linga came to be called Kapilēśwara and the tank Kapilātīrtam. The tank is also known as 'Sudarsanātīrtam' and 'Chakratīrtam' because at the four corners of the tank, the stone slabs contain relief sculptures of Sudarasana or Chakratālvar.<sup>86</sup>

### **The LakshmīNarasimha Shrine**

This is situated, above the western pillared corridor of the tank. It houses the image of Lakshmī-Narasimha. Since Narasimha is a cave dweller, this shrine has been conceived of in the form of a cave, cut as it were, in to the Tirumala Hill. The image of LakshmīNarasimha was set up in the shrine probably at the time of installation of Lakshmī - Nārāyana, in 'S' 1467 (20 - 6-1546 A.D.) by Tāllapākam Periya Tirumalayyāṅgar.<sup>87</sup>

## **4. The LakshmīNarasimha Temple at Pāpēpalle:**

This village is situated at distance of one mile from the 14/3 mile stone of Gālivedu - Gurramkoṇḍa road, 25 miles from

### ***Select Centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema***

Kurabalakōṭa Railway Station and 36 miles from Manadapalle by road. The village contains Lord Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>Narasimha Swamy temple with the stone, wooden and three processional metal images of Narasimha. One furlong to the north of Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>Narasimhaswamy temple, there is a Kōṇēru (tank) known as mukhamandapa "*Baṇḍapaina Kōṇēru*".

#### **5. The Narasimhaswamy Temple at Kothavāri Palli :**

Kothavānpalle, a small village is situated 2 furlongs from Lacha Reddy cheruvu and 3 miles from Madanapalle via Lacha Reddy Cheruvu on Madanapalle- Chembakūru bus route. The village is famous for the temple of Lord Narasimhaswamy. The festival of Lord Narasimhaswamy takes place on phaḷguṇa, Śuddha Pūrṇima for a day in accordance with the well known *Tirunāḷa* of Kāḍir in Anantapūr district. Devotees fulfil their vows. Large quantity of *pānakam* (Jaggery water) is offered to the deity. The deity is taken out in procession on festive occasions.

#### **6. The Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>Narasimha Temple at Kondamarri:**

Kondamarri, a small village is situated at a distance of about 2½ miles from Puiganūr - Kallūr motor route. The Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>Narasimhaswamy temple is on a hillock with His self manifested stone image in the form of a plantain bud which is said to be growing year after year. The festival of Lord Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>Narasimhaswamy is celebrated on all Sāturdays from Srāvaṇa Śuddha Pādyami to Bahula Amāvāsya. This is concluded by "*Puṭṭa Tirunāḷa*" (Puṭṭa-anthill) on the last Sāturday and Sunday. Dhoopa, deepa, naivēdyam, eyes and fangs of precious metals are offered to the deity.

#### **4. Cuḍḍapah District :**

In Cuḍḍapah District, the temples of Narasimha are to be found in the following places.

- |                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Peddamuḍiyam   | 10. Imakallu              |
| 2. Jeelavānpalle  | 11. Pōrumāmilla           |
| 3. Koṇḍasunkēśula | 12. Bommavaram            |
| 4. Vōḡunūṭala     | 13. Chinnakōmerla         |
| 5. Gaṇḍikota      | 14. Veyyinūṭalakōṇa       |
| 6. Pothipādu      | 15. Timmanayānpēṭa        |
| 7. Kongunutla     | 16. Ahōbalaṃ (Pulivendla) |
| 8. Kalluṭṭa       | 17. Pennapēṭūru and       |
| 9. Penavaram      | 18. Yēṭūru                |

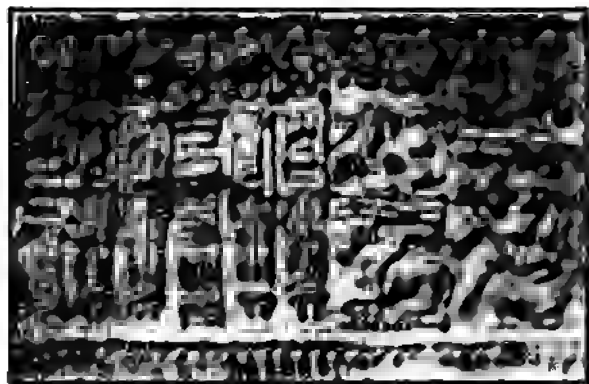
Of all the above stated places, the temples at Peddamuḍiyam are important, while the rest are minor shrines of Narasimha.

##### **1. Temples of Narasimha at Peddamuḍiyam**

Peddamuḍiyam, a small village on the left bank of river Kundēru, is at a distance of nineteen kms from Jammalamaḍugu, the taluk head quarters in Cuḍḍapah district. This village was also known as 'Trilōchanapura', 'Brāhmaṇamuḍiyam' and 'Muḍiyam'. Peddamuḍiyam is famous for two temples of Narasimha. The first one is on the riverbank and it is known as Ugra (Vidārana) Narasimha Swamy Temple and the second one is one kilometre away to the east of the first temple and it is known as Yōḡananda Narasimha Swamy Temple. The former is earlier than the latter,

### *Select Centres of worship of Narasimha to Bāvalasarma*

There are four epigraphs which give some information about the temples of Narasimha. The antiquity of the cult of Narasimha in Bāvalasarma, can be gleaned from a stone plaque found at this place (Plate 1). In it there is a representation of nine deities, including Narasimha which is third in order from the left and it belongs to the fifth or sixth century A.D.<sup>88</sup> Sivaramamurti is of the opinion that this sculpture belongs to the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. An inscription of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is found in the Siva Temple at Peddamugiyam. It states that a grant of the Muduvēru village was made to the



1. Stone plaque showing Narasimha, Peddamugiyam, 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Matthaparas of this place in 1124 A.D. by Mahāmāyakaśvara in the presence of Lord Narasimha of Ahobala.<sup>89</sup> Most probably of this place<sup>90</sup> during the reign of the Chālukya King, Tribhuvana Malladeva. The inscription refers itself to the reign of the Chālukya King Tribhuvana Malladeva and mentions his feudatory, the Mahāmāyakaśvara Arama Chibba Matthapara and his feudatory, the

Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Chiddana Chōḷa mahārāja who made a grant. There is another epigraph of 1551 A.D. from the same Siva temple in Peddamuḍiyam, which records the gift of Brāhmaṇa muḍiyam village to God Narasimha by one Chinna Bānavayya.<sup>91</sup> Yet another inscription of 1557 A.D. in the Narasimha temple in this village, refers to the arrangement made for the 'Pāruvēta' (Hunting Festival) of Narasimha of 'Brāhmaṇa muḍiyam Agrahāram' by two devotees, Gaurayya and Nāgayya, during the reign of king Sadāśiva.<sup>92</sup> Further, an undated inscription in the Narasimha temple, records a gift of land as *māṇyam* by 108 Mahājans of Brāhmaṇa muḍiyam to two artisans for building the *śikhara* to the Narasimha temple and for its permanent maintenance and repairs.<sup>93</sup>

The temple of Vidārana (Ugra or ferocious) Narasimha Swamy consists of a *sanctum ahtarāḷa* and *mukhamandapa*. A feature worthy of note is that the deity in the sanctum has *Ashtabhujas* (eight arms).

The other temple of Yōgānanda Narasimha Swamy on the outskirts of the village has shrines for Navagrahas and Śiva within the temple. On the axis, the Yōgānanda Narasimha temple consists of a sanctum and *mukhamandapa* and faces to the east. In front of the presiding deity, there is a standing stone sculpture of Lakshmi on a pedestal, which is 2 ft in height.

#### **Minor Temples of Narasimha in Cuḍḍapah District**

The places having some minor temples of Narasimha have been listed above. These temples confirm the fact that the cult of Narasimha as in other districts, was popular in this part of

### ***Select Centres of worship of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema***

Rāyalaseema. These temples are smaller in size and modest in scale. The temples in their construction and iconographic features of the images and the sculptures therein do not differ much.

#### **1. The Narasimha at Pennapērūru :**

This is associated with a historic fact of the British Collector, Munro who said that he would confirm the *inām* tenure of the temple service only when the God appear before him. It is said that the collector's wish was fulfilled and the *inām* was returned after the Karanam's prayer to the God.

#### **2. The Narasimha Swamy Temple at Veyyinūtulakōna :**

This temple is located in a picturesque setting of a valley of a thousand wells. Hence the name of the area is called 'Veyyinūtala - Kōna'.

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## RITUALS AND FESTIVALS .

Temple rituals are the ceremonies performed by the priest in a temple. By reciting the 'Mantrās' of the scriptures, the priest invokes the God for human welfare and for particular blessings to the devotees. Festivals are celebrated on special occasions for religious ceremonies in the presence of large gatherings in the temple. The fairs or 'Tirunālḷu' conducted on their occasion attract large social gatherings and promote devotion to the deity. The festivals are celebrated with great jubilation with the back drop of religion. The festivals may be of a single day or couple of days or even a week.

• Prayer to God is a general Hindu daily ritual by the devotee to pay his respects to the family deity and invoke His blessings. According to the Hindu tradition, a Hindu is born with three debts to be discharged in the course of his life, namely i) The debt he owes to his parents and ancestors, ii) The debt he owes to the ancient Rishies (seers) and iii) The debt he owes to the Gods and the Nature. This is the origin of the charities to the temples to secure religious merit and divine grace. The charities to the temples as known from the inscriptions include those of (1) Construction (2) Renovation of Temples (3), Consecration of images, (4) Construction of Mandapas and (5) Kōṇērus (water ponds) and flower and fruit gardens-all to propitiate the God. These will be studied in detail in the sequel.

### 1. Construction of Temples :

The construction of temples and auxiliary structures and installation of deities was considered an act of great religious merit.

The temple was conceived as the Manifestation of the supreme and its construction was therefore, the best way of worshipping Him. The construction of a temple, which is one of the 'Saptasantānas' was expected to confer on the builder several benefits like longevity, health, wealth and prosperity in this world, besides religious merit in the other world. It is for these reasons that many people, from princes down to the ordinary citizens, vied with one another in building temples. Bukka built a temple to Śrī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy on the Gooty Hill in Anantapūr District and consecrated the image of the God in it.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Harihara built a 'maṇṭapa' to God Narasimha Swāmy at Paṭarapalli.<sup>2</sup>

Private individuals also shared the noble service to God in the construction and renovation of temples. The Ambavaram Kaiḥiyat says that Proudā Dēvarāya (1442-46 A.D.) of Vijayanagara built a Narasimha temple at Bomṇiavaram, consecrated the image of God and also provided for the 'aṅga rangabhōgas' to the God.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Renovation of Temples:**

Besides the construction of temples, renovation of old temples was also considered a sacred act for gaining spiritual merit and material prosperity. The technical word for this renovation is 'Jīmōddhāra'. The renovation works included (i) repairs to the temple structure, (ii) construction of *prākāra*, *vimāna*, *gōpura*, and 'Garuda Stanibhas', (iii) repairs to *maṇḍapas* and (iv) flights of steps to the temple. Interesting information is available from the inscriptions regarding the renovative works. In the Rāyalaseema region, the famous Vijayanagara kings undertook the task of upholding 'Sanātana Hindu Dharma' which covered the renovation

of temples also. The renovation of the temple at Kaḷḷuṭṭa and the *Rathōtsava* and other festivals of Lord Narasimha were conducted during the reign of Achyutarāya in 1536 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. Construction of Vimānas, Gōpuras and Maṇḍapas:**

An inscription of 1490 A.D. of the reign of Śāluva Narasimha of Vijayanagara, states that the tall 'gōpura' of Lakṣmī Narasimha Perumāl shrine at Alipiri (at the foot of the Tirumala Hill) was the charitable service of Kārveṭṭipuli-Ālvār - Mannār Piḷḷai of Uttara Mērūr.<sup>5</sup> One Maḍiṣeṭṭi Rudrayya and others made the gift of seven gold-gilded kalaśas (pinnacle) to the God Ahōbala Vīra Narasimha Dēvara at Lower Ahōbīlam in 1609 A.D.<sup>6</sup> Prōlaya Vēma Reddy, a popular Reddy King (1423-47 A.D.) built flight of steps to the Upper Ahōbīlam Temple in 1337 A.D.<sup>7</sup> Renovation was necessary for proper maintenance of the temple structures to procure spiritual merit.

### **4. Consecration of the Images :**

The consecration of images is considered as great as temple construction. The consecration is performed at the time of construction of new temples or renovation of the old temple or when the image was destroyed or destroyed by the Muslim invaders. The consecration of images was undertaken for the merit of parents, families and of the devotees themselves. According to the Pañcharātra Āgamas, the images are classified as i) 'Dhruvārcha' (Mūlavirāt) ii) 'Karmārcha' (for daily worship) iii) 'Utsavārcha' or Kaetuka (for procession) iv) 'Bālyārcha' (for daily Bālihāraṇa) v) 'Sñānārcha' (for bathing purpose) vi) 'Mukhārcha' (for Brahmōtsava celebration) vii) 'Tīrthārcha' (for Arabhṇḍham) and viii) 'Swapothanārcha' (for sayanōtsavas).<sup>8</sup>



The process of consecration of images started from 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and continued till the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Kings and their nobles and private individuals took up the task of consecrating the images in the temples. In 1229 A.D. the image of god Yōgānanda Narasimhadēva was set up to the north of the Chinna Tumbalam village by Ananta priya during the reign of Jastugi, the Yādava king<sup>9</sup> and was patronised not only by the kings but also by private individuals. King Bukkarāya-I reinstalled the image of Yōgānanda Narasimha Swamy and erected a Pagōḍa at Gandikōṭa in 1375 A.D.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the images of God Narasimha, the image of twelve Vaishnava Ālvars (Panniḍḍaru Ālvars) were also consecrated in the temple of Vōbaladēva (Narasimha) at Vōnūtala in the cyclic year Durmathi which corresponds to (1441-42 A.D.),<sup>11</sup> in the reign of Dēvarāya-II (1422-46 A.D.)

Sārvabhauma Śaḷuva Narasimha of Vijayanagara consecrated an image of Sṛi Lakṣmī Narasimha on the foot-path up the Sēṣṭadri Hill leading to Tirumala in 1485 A.D.<sup>12</sup> Two inscriptions of 16<sup>th</sup> century, mention the 'Pratiṣṭhā' of the Narasimha images in the 'siru (Chinna) Tirumalai Iyengar installed Sṛi Narasingapperumāl within the temple of Kattari Hanumān in 1547 A.D. in Tirupati during the reign Sadāsiva of Vijayanagara.<sup>13</sup>

### **5. Construction of the Mandapas :**

Several devotees evinced keen interest in constructing maṇḍapas within the precincts of the temples. The purpose of construction of 'maṇḍapas' was to celebrate certain regular festivals of the Lord and to give easy 'Darṣan' to one and all. An inscription of 1590 A.D. from Lower Ahōbilam supports this view and states

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that an individual gave a gift of land for offerings during the procession of God Prahlāda Varada (Narasimha) at Lower Ahōbīlam during the reign of Venkaṭapati of Vijayanagara.<sup>14</sup> There are a number of such grants at Ahōbīlam and other places.

The earliest inscription in this series of maṇḍapas is of 1352 A.D. of the reign of Bukka-I of Vijayanagara. It states that the construction of the maṇḍapa of Aubhaladēva temple in Kadiri<sup>15</sup> was completed by one Paṇḍima Sannāyini Chelīnāyaka. Another inscription of the Vijayanagara king Harihara-II, records the construction of a maṇḍapa in the Ahōbīla temple in 1395 A.D.<sup>16</sup> An epigraph of 1404 A.D. mentions the building of a maṇḍapa for Lakṣmī Narasimha at Tirupati.<sup>17</sup> A maṇḍapa for Ahōbīlēswara at Kottachintakuṇṭa was built in 1527 A.D.<sup>18</sup>

Now we note the inscriptions which mention not only the construction of the maṇḍapas but also certain festivals performed on certain occasions when the God is installed in the maṇḍapas. An inscription of 1548 A.D. records the construction of a 'Vasāṛita maṇḍapa' to the north of Lower Ahōbīlam by one Narasamma, wife of Mahāmaṇḍalēswara Goburī Vōbaya during the rule of Sadāsiva of Vijayanagara. He had also endowed 120 *varahas* to the temple for conducting the festivals in honour of Ahōbīlēswara seated in the maṇḍapa<sup>19</sup> from the interest accruing on the endowment. The 1553 A.D. inscription also mentions a cash endowment for offering during the sixteen day festival, every year when the God is seated in the sixteen pillared maṇḍapa in the Upper Ahōbīlam temple. Emberumānār Jīyyangār and others had also endowed a piece of land and money in 1558 A.D. for the conduct of festivals to the

Lord in the maṇḍapa and when the God was taken in procession to Lower Ahōbilam<sup>20</sup> and back. Mahāmaṇḍalēśwara Gōpinātha Rāju, during the reign of Sadāśiva, made a gift of money in 1560 A.D. for conducting the 'maṇḍapa' festivals to the Lord Ahōbalēśwara in the Lower Ahōbilam temple.<sup>21</sup> According to the Ahōbilam Kaiḥiyat, the four pillared maṇḍapa was constructed by Gopinatha Rāju. The word 'Bhōga' is associated with a particular maṇḍapa for 'the enjoyment' to the God in the maṇḍapa. There is a four pillared maṇḍapa in the Upper Ahōbilam which was built by Parāmkūṣa Van Sathakopa Jīyyangār. He made a gift of land in 1563 A.D. for offerings to Ahōbilēśwara while seated in the maṇḍapa during the 'Pañchaparvas'. During the reign of Sadāśiva, a provision was made for offering and services to the god seated in the 16 pillared maṇḍapa built in the Lower Tirupati (Ahōbilam) on special occasions.<sup>22</sup> Thus, during 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of maṇḍapas have been added not only by kings and nobles but also by pious devotees for the enjoyment of the God.

#### **6. Construction of Kōṇērus (Water Tanks) :**

Water tanks (pushkarinis) were necessary adjuncts to temples. There are instances of tanks being constructed for bathing purposes of the god and the devotees. An inscription of 1564 A.D. states that during the reign of Sadāśiva, 'Śrī Saṭhagōpa Jīyyangāru has constructed a 'Kōṇēru' on the way to Bhārgava Narasimha temple and also provided for offerings to the Lord in the 'Chantra' month on the eve of festivals.<sup>23</sup>

## **7. Plantation of Flower and Fruit Gardens :**

Flower and fruit gardens were raised for the supply of basil leaves (Tulasi) and fruits for the *Navvēdyā* of the God. An inscription of 1404 A.D. records the laying out of a flower-garden at Tirupati for Narasimha Swamy.<sup>24</sup> An epigraph of 1550 A.D. from Chinna Ahōbīlam states that Avubhalarāju raised a garden with coconut and other fruit bearing trees in favour of Ahobalēśwara of Ahōbīlam. Besides the kings and nobles, their relatives also contributed for the raising of the gardens as service to God. One Achchamma, Daughter of Śrī Raṅga Rājayya Dēva Mahārāja had made a gift for the maintenance of 'Tirunandanavanam' in 1558 A.D. during the rule of King Sadāśiva.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the grants made for the gardens tell us their importance in the worship of God Narasimha.

### **A. Rituals in the Temples :**

There are several sacred texts dealing with the rituals in the temples. The earliest is the *Vishnu Smṛiti*, consisting of an invocation to the deity, the offering of 'Ārghya' or water for washing the hands and feet, for sipping and bathing, offering the deity of incense, holy garments, ornaments and flowers etc., and worshipping of the 'Akhandā Dīpa' (the perpetual lamp).<sup>26</sup> The rites and practices relating to daily worship of the deity were regularised in works like the *Baudhāyana Gṛhya Sūtras*<sup>27</sup> and *Vaikhānasa Smārtasūtras*.<sup>28</sup> The various forms of worship were all standardised into sixteen acts of worship popularly known as 'Shōḍasōphchāras'. All the credit for the standardisation of the sixteen *Upachāras* in shrines dedicated to Vishnu goes to the Vaishnava saint Śrī Rāmānuja<sup>29</sup> and his disciples and their descendents, known as 'Āchārya Purushas' for the

propagation of the Vaiṣṇava mode of worship. The common feature between the *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcharātra* systems of worship is the 'Archa' (Icon) form of the Lord since it enables the process of '*Prapatti*' absolute surrender of the devotees. The priests strongly believed that the performance of all the '*Shōdasōpachāras*' in the temples not only purifies the performer but also creates a cosmic force at a particular centre bringing holiness and happiness to all the residents besides leading to general welfare (Lōka Kalyānārtham). The *Sōdaśa* (sixteen) *Upchārās* are widespread and popular in Rāyalaseema.

It was firmly believed that rituals and utsavas were invigorating and strengthening the power of the god for bestowing the blessings upon the devotees. The Sanskrit word 'Utsava' indicates the grace of God that dispels human misery and sorrow.<sup>30</sup> To alleviate the multitude of sorrows of human beings, the 'Āgama Śāstras' have prescribed the various periodical utsavas<sup>31</sup> such as i) '*Nityōtsava*' (daily ceremony), ii) '*Pakshōtsava*' (fortnightly ceremony), iii) '*Māsōtvasa*' (monthly ceremony) and '*Varshōtsava*' (Annual ceremony). In addition to these, there were '*Vārōtsava*' (weekly festivals) and the '*Tirunakshatras*' of the Viṣṇavite Āḷvārs and other minor festivals. The above mentioned utsavas as known from the available inscriptions are discussed below.

### 1. *Nityōtsavās* (Daily Ceremonies) :

The rituals in a temple from morning to the night daily, attract and impress the devotees and result in spreading the Narasimha cult. *Purushōttama Samhita* describes the daily 'Utsavas' (*Nityōtsavās*) that are to be performed in the temples. According

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to the inscription available and the interviews held with a few priests, the rituals and festivals performed in the temples under study are discussed below. The rituals from morning to night, which were performed in the temples since distant past through traditions, oral and recorded, have the sanction of the Āgama Sāstras. An inscription of 1561 A D from the Lower Ahōbilam temple, describes the worship to the Lord as 'Tiruvārādhana' <sup>32</sup> It seems that a daily worship to the God was the usual practice in these days. The inscription from Chinnadāsarpalli dated 1370 A.D. registers the gift of the village named after the God Ahōbalēswara at Vēyīnūtula by Nāmbi Nāranadās. for the 'Nityōtsava' of the God during the reign of Bukkarāya-I of Vijayanagara. <sup>33</sup> Some important daily rituals performed in the temples under study are discussed below.

#### **(i) Akhaṇḍa Dīpam (The Perpetual Lamp)**

The *Akhaṇḍa Dīpam* (Perpetual lamp) is lit throughout the day and night in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in the divine presence of the deity with ghee or oil. The procedure of burning this lamp is narrated in the *Pāñcharātra Samhita*. <sup>34</sup> The perpetual lamp enhances the radiance of the Lord who is the symbol of light. Another interpretation is that the *Akhaṇḍa-Jyōti* is the 'Ātma' of the temple in which the God resides in the 'Archarūpa' (Icon form). It purifies the souls of devotees. It is replaced on every 'Kārttika Pūrṇima' (November-December) in the year. There is Sanskrit saying as. <sup>35</sup>

“Jyōtishnata Vimanena

Viṣṇu Lōke Mahīyate”

means that he who presents the Akhaṇḍa-Dīpam to the God goes to the Viṣṇu Lōka or 'Vyākuntam' (Paramapadam) sitting in the

‘vimāna’ as vehicle. With this faith, the kings, queens, nobles and their relations made endowments in cash or kind for the provision of the *Akhaṇḍa-Dīpa*. The institution of Akhaṇḍa-Dīpas in the Naraśimha temples as known from the inscriptions started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and continued till 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**(ii) The ‘Maṅgala Gītas’ :**

These were sung praying the deity to wake up. They are known as ‘Suprabhāta Gītas’. The ‘Vēṅkateswara Suprabhāta’ is a very popular Gīta in the South.

**(iii) The Saṅkīrtana :**

Both in the morning and evening, this was recited describing the various names of the God by a specially appointed person in the temple and the devotees take up the Saṅkīrtana, also known as ‘Bhajana’.

**(iv) Ārādhana :**

Ārādhana or worship of the Lord is the crux of the temple rituals. According to the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the priests should be faultless, righteous persons, well versed in the Vēdas and Puranas and should be ‘Dvijas’ of high descent. Ārādhana should start with ‘Dīpārādhana’.

Ārādhana consists of sixteen types of services known popularly as ‘Shōḍaśōpachāras’. The following sixteen ‘Upachāras’ are observed in the Vishnu temples.<sup>36</sup>

- |             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| 1. ĀVĀHANAM | - | Invocation of Lord’s presence                 |
| 2. ĀSANAM   | - | He is offered a seat                          |
| 3. PADYAM   | - | He is offered water for washing the holy feet |

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4. ĀRGHYAM - The God is given water for washing hands.
5. ACHAMANIYAM - The God is given water for taking in
6. PANCHĀMRITHAM - The five ingredients of *Panchāmritham* are  
i) Cow's milk with Sugar  
ii) Curds made of Cow's milk  
iii) Butter or Ghee made of Cow's milk  
iv) Honey and  
v) A little water after the offer of 'Madhu Parkam'  
(clothes), 'Sudha Achamaniyam' is done followed by water with *Panchāmritha* for the holy bath of the deity.
7. VASTRA DVAYAM - Presentation of holy dress followed by  
*Suddhachamaniyam*
8. YAGNĪPAVĪTAM - Offer of nine-stranded thread followed by  
*Suddhachamaniyam*



- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 9. GANDHAM &<br>ALANKARAṆAM | Offering of Sandal paste<br>followed by offer<br>of ornaments for decoration  |
| 10. PUSHPAM                 | - Keeping of flowers and Basil<br>(Tulasī) leaves on the Lord.  |
| 11. DHŪPAM                  | - Incense is offered to the God   |
| 12. DIPAM                   | - <i>Hārathi</i> with lit wicks (lighted<br>lamp) to the God  |
| 13. NAIVĒDYAM               | - Cooked food and fruits are<br>offered to the God  |
| 14. TĀMBŪLAM                | - Betel leaves are offered to God   |
| 15. NĪRĀJANAM               | - <i>Hārathi</i> (lighted lamp) is shown<br>to the God.   |
| 16. ĀTMA PRADAKSHINA        | - The last of the<br><i>Shōdasōpachārās</i> is showing<br>NAMASKARAM showing<br>obeisance, making of three<br>rounds from left to right in the<br>presence of the Lord-concluding<br>act of <i>Ārādhana</i> . |

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The *Shōḍasa Upachārās* (sixteen kinds of doing homage to the deity) in vogue are referred to in an inscription of 1448 A.D.<sup>37</sup>

### **(v) Tirumañjanam :**

The sacred bath to God is performed with milk and water. An inscription of 1561 A.D. clearly mentions the provision for the *Tirumañjana* service to the Ahōbīlēsvara of Ahōbīlam.<sup>38</sup> *Tirumañjana-kaduva* is a pot with holy water for the bath of the deity. This service is popularly known as '*Abhiśhēka*' with holy water in a silver cup known as *Sahasradhāra-Talya*. There are scores of records recording the endowments made either in cash or in kind for a *Tirumañjana-kaduva* daily in the morning.<sup>39</sup>

### **(vi) Garland of Basil Leaves (Tulasīmāla) :**

On the occasion of *Tirumañjana* garlands of basil leaves (*Tulasīmāla*) are offered to the God.

### **(vii) Purusha Sūktam :**

On the eve of *Tirumañjana* or *Abhiśhēka* of the God, the *Purusha Sūktam* is read out. The greatness of the God is revealed in the *Purusha Sūktam*.

### **(viii) Yajñōpavītam :**

After the holy bath, nine stranded sacred threads called *Yajñōpavītam* is offered to the God.

### **(ix) Sandal Paste (Chandanam) :**

Sandal paste is prepared from a piece of sandalwood with a little water rubbed on the '*Sāna Rāyi*', specially made for the purpose and offered to the God. An endowment was made in cash to the Ahōbīlam temple during the reign of Venkatarāya of Vijayanagara.

in 1585 A.D.<sup>40</sup> Another epigraph of 1507 A.D. mentions the supply of Sandal paste (Charīdanam) to Aḷagiya Śingar of Śrīnivāsapuram, near Tirupati.<sup>41</sup>

**(x) Alaṁkaraṇam (Decoration) :**

We come across the Vaḍagalai Vaishnava *Thiru Nāman* ('U' shape) caste mark on a stone slab near the temple of Narasimha Swamy at Eguvapalli in Cuddapah District. At the top of the inscription dated 1547 A.D., the Vaishnava Vaḍagalai (a sect of Vaishnavas) castemark is carved on the slab.<sup>42</sup> Thus we can infer that the decoration of the forehead of the God was in vogue either in the Vaḍagalai style of 'U' shaped caste mark or the Teṅgalai style of 'Y' shaped castemark, both belonging to the Sri Vaishnava culture. Perhaps both the marks had been prevalent from the 16th century onwards as attested by the inscriptions. Then the Lord was decorated with garlands of leaves and flowers. There are nearly twenty three inscriptions from 1104 A.D. to 1561 A.D. attesting to this type of daily practice, both in the morning and evening in the temples of Ahōbīlam<sup>43</sup> and Simhāchalam. After the garlands, the God is decorated with precious ornaments. There are about fifteen inscriptions recording gifts of various ornaments from 1291 A.D. to 1599 A.D. to Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at places like Kadiri and Ahōbīlam.<sup>44</sup>

**(xi) Dhūpadīpam :**

Incense and the lamp of wicks are offered to the God.

**(xii) Tāmbūlam :**

After the Naivēdyam to the God, *Tāmbūlam* or *Vidyam* (Betel leaves and arecanuts) is offered to the God. An inscription

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of 1507 A.D. records that 50 arecanuts and 100 betel leaves were offered to the God Aḷaḡiya Singar of Śrīnivāsapuram on *Vasantapūrṇima* day.<sup>45</sup>

#### **(xiii) Vinjāmara :**

This is a white hairy fly-wisk (fan ) with a silver coated stick. It is used for fanning the God. A Sanskrit verse says that, He who serves the Lord with a *Chāmara* will attain 'Mōksha'<sup>46</sup>. An inscription of 1609 A.D. records the gift of two *Chāmaras* to the Vīra Narasimha temple at Diguva Tirupati (Lower Ahōbīlam) by private individuals during the reign of Vīra Venkatapati of Vijayanagara.<sup>47</sup>

#### **(xiv) Nritya :**

Dance (Nritya) in a temple by young dancers was considered a part of temple rituals in the medieval period. One Venkatavalli, a damsel was attached to the Narasimha Swāmy Temple in Tirupati in 1457 A.D.<sup>48</sup>

#### **(xv) Sahasranāmārchana :**

The practice of reading *Sahasra nāmas* (Thousand Names) of the God during mid day daily was in vogue in the temples. The God is worshipped either with flowers or with basil leaves in the morning and by chanting His thousand names in the temples by the priests. An inscription of 1545 A.D. states that *Sahasranāma* worship was instituted at the temple of Upper Ahōbīlam and provisions were made for the appointment of a priest, who recites the *Sahasranāmas*.<sup>49</sup> This practice is popular even today in all the temples, dedicated to Vishnu.

**(xvi) Pānakam Sēva (Jaggery Water):**

In addition to food-stuffs and milk, the God was offered *Pānakam* (Jaggery water) daily. This was in practice from 1493 A.D.<sup>50</sup> to 1547 A.D.<sup>51</sup> Of these, the earliest is that of 1493 A.D. which records the daily offering of *Pānakam* to the God of Narasimha in the shrine at Tirumala. Similarly, in the other shrines like Narasimha (Adippuḥaḍi Śingar) in Tirupati, the God was offered *Tiruppānakam* (Pānakam) in 1507 A.D. and in 1547 A.D.

**(xvii) The Bhōgam, Mēlam and Tāna Mēlālu :**

An inscription of 1561 A.D. from Ahōbīlam, of reign of Sadāśiva of Vijayanagara, records that Timmarāja had instituted the services of 'Bhōgam, Mēlam' and 'Tāna Mēlam' in the Ahōbīlam temples.<sup>52</sup> It indicates singing and dancing for the enjoyment of the God by qualified persons who could play on certain musical instruments during the performance of rituals.

**(xviii) Goḍavu :**

This is called 'Chatra' in Sanskrit and Goḍugu in Telugu. The umbrella service is meant to give shelter to the God from the sun and the rain when He is taken out from the shrine for the procession in the town. An inscription of 1609 A.D. from Chinna Ahōbīlam records a white silk umbrella to the God Ahōbala Vīra Narasimhadēva in Dīguva Tirupati (Lower Ahōbīlam) for his service.<sup>53</sup>

**(xiv) Satha Kōpam :**

This is a round vessel, made of silver or copper with small figures of the foot-prints of God Vishnu on the outer apex of the vessel. This is always kept in a plate before the processional idols

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of the God in such a way that the foot-prints are visible to the devotees. The devotees who visit the temple are blessed by the touch of *Śathagōpam* upon their heads, which is considered as keeping the feet of the God on their heads in humility to gain blessing from the God.

The Ahōbīlam Kaiḥiyat of 1584 says that the temple honours such as 'Parivattam', 'Tīrtham', 'Prasādam', 'Śathagōpam', 'Taḥga Prasādam', 'Pannīru' and 'Garidham' were in practice in the temple of Narasimha of Ahōbīlam.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the rituals in a temple would commence from the early morning and continue till night in a day, celebrating the above stated different types of rituals for the service and enjoyment of the God.

### **2. Festivals :**

Apart from the above discussed *Nityōtsava* (Daily ceremony), the following *Utsavās* are also celebrated in the temples of Narasimha under study

#### **(i) Vārōtsavas (Weekly Ceremony):**

An inscription of S 1466- 1544 A.D. 'Plavanga' year mentions that on every Friday, 'Pulikāpu. Kankaryam' and special offering were made to God Ahōbīlam Narasimha during the reign of Sadāsiva of Vijayanagara.<sup>55</sup>

#### **(ii) Pakshōtsavas (Fortnightly Ceremony) :**

These are celebrated every fortnight regularly in the Narasimha temples.

#### **(iii) Māsōtsavas (Monthly Ceremony) :**

These are celebrated once in every month in the temples under study.

**(iv) Varshōtsavas (Annual Festival) :**

The annual festivals are celebrated once in a year regularly to propitiate the presiding deity. The important annual festival is called the *BRAHMŌTSAVAM* of which the car festival (Rathōtsavam) attracts devotees from far and wide. At every house the deity is offered 'Harathu' that is supposed to bring welfare and happiness to them.

Another important annual festival is *Tirupallu-eluchchi*, which is known as 'DHANURMĀSAM' festival. The earliest record relating to the observance of this 'Dhanurmāsam' festival occurs in 1493 A.D. at Narasimha Swamy shrine in Tirumala.<sup>56</sup> On the occasion of Dhanurmāsa festival, jaggery water (Tirupānakam) was offered to the God Aḷaḡiya Śingar (Narasimha) enshrined within the temple of Tiruvēnkaṭamuḍaiyān (Sri Venkateswara) in Tirumala.<sup>57</sup> Two other records of 1536 A.D.<sup>58</sup> and an undated inscription attest the practice of the *Utsava* in the shrine of Narasimha in Tirumala.

The third annual festival is 'KŌYIAL ĀLVĀR TIRUMANJANAM' which is meant for cleaning the sanctum and later on offerings were given to the God. This practice was attested by an inscription of 1554 A.D. from Tirupati.<sup>59</sup> This inscription refers to the celebration of Brahmōtsavam in the temple of Narasimha. It also refers to the 'Adhyayanōtsavam, for God Narasimha in 1544 A.D. when the *Divya Prabandha* known as 'Nālāyiram' is recited in the temple. The earliest reference to it in the Tirumala occurs in 1400 A.D. and the latest reference is in 1635 A.D.<sup>60</sup> It is still performed in all Vishnu temples in Āndhra Pradesh. Suffice is to say that yearly *utsavās* continued till 17<sup>th</sup> century, the period of our study.

### **Special Utsavās :**

In addition to the above stated *utsavas*, other *utsavas* such as *Angaranga bhōgas*, *Mahōtsavas*, *Tirukkōdi-tirunāl* and *Tirunālḷu* were also performed in the temples of Narasimha.

### **Angaranga Bhōgas :**

This relates to all enjoyments daily or occasional rituals to the God in the temples in perpetuity. There are epigraphical references to the celebration of *Angaranga bhōgas* in Vōgunūtula in 1350 A.D.<sup>61</sup> Ahōbīlam in 1515 A.D.<sup>62</sup> and 1529 A.D.<sup>63</sup>

### **2. Mahōtsavas :**

These were grand ceremonies performed in the temple for the enjoyment of the God. An inscription of 1557 A D from Peddamuḍiyam village in Cuddapah District, mentions the provision made for 'Pāruveta Mahōtsava' to the God Narasimha.<sup>64</sup> The pleasure ride of the God on his vehicle, Garuda to the outskirts of the village generally on the Vijayadasami day is known as 'Pāruveta Mahōtsava'.

### **3. Tirukkōḍi - Tirunāl (Brahmōtsavam) :**

Apart from the celebration of the annual 'Brahmōtsavas', occasional 'Brahmōtsavas' were also celebrated in the temples under study. An inscription of 1493 A D describes that seven Tirukkōḍi Tirunāl's were celebrated in the Tiruvēnkaṭa muḍiyān temple on Tirumala Hills, and on the seventh day in each of the seven 'Tirukkōḍi Tirunāl', *Atraśa paḍi* (Special offering) was offered to the God Alagiya Śingar (Narasimha Swamy) enshrined within the Tirumala temple.<sup>65</sup> Further Alagiya Śingar of Śrīnivāspuram was also given the '*Atrasa paḍi*' on each of the 7<sup>th</sup> festival day in 1507 A D.<sup>66</sup>



Another record of 1536 A.D. from the same place, states that the special offering of 'Dōsaipadi' was instituted on the ninth day (Sēshavāhana festival of Vaikāsi and Āṇi Brahmōtsavas of Sri Narasimha in Śrīnivāsapuram, a suburb of Tirupati).<sup>67</sup>

#### **4. Tirunāḷḷu**

These festivals are celebrated for some time or stipulated period occasionally. An inscription of 1410 A.D. from the Upper Ahōbīlam states that a provision was made for the conduct of 'Tirunāḷa Mahōtsavas' to the God Vēdadri Sri Narasimha Dēvara.<sup>68</sup> Another inscription of 1548 A.D. from Yerragudi village, mentions the arrangement made for the conduct to Tirunāḷa to God Sri Ahōbīlalēśvara of the place. Yet another inscription of 1564 A.D. from the Upper Ahōbīlam, mentions that *ubhaya Tirunāḷs* were instituted for God Ahōbalēśvara.<sup>69</sup>

#### **B. The Festivals in the Temples :**

The conduct of the daily rituals differs naturally from the festivals of the God. Sādhu Subramanya Sāstri equates the 'Utsavas' with *Tirunāḷs* of festivals.<sup>70</sup>

According to J. Gonda, 'the temple festivals invigorate and strengthen the powers of the deity periodically.'<sup>71</sup> The *utsavas* in the temples may be classified into two categories according to the nature of their institutions.

'Festivals sanctioned by the Āgama Sāstras'

'Festivals evolved by the custom or sishāchāra'

The first category may be said as the fundamental festivals ordained by the Āgama and Dharma Sāstras to be observed scrupulously on fixed times and any dereliction would be deemed

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profane which needs preliminary purification rites. 'Brahmōtsavas' belong to this category.

The second category are auxiliary festivals which have the origin in the traditional divine life of the deity or in the incarnations or *Avatāras* of God Vishnu, 'Dhanurmāsam' festivals and those conducted on the day of 'Tirunakshatram' of deities or Ālvārs come under this category. Here, we take up the general Hindu festivals and *Tirunakshatras* of the deities as other *Utsavas* are dealt with earlier. These festivals are given in chronological order, with a view to note the antiquity of the festival and their celebration in the various temples during the period of study. There are nearly twelve festivals known from the inscriptions, observed in the temples during the medieval period. 'Purushōttama Samhita' gives an account of the festivals which are to be celebrated in the temples on stipulated days.<sup>72</sup> As per the epigraphs, the following festivals were known to have been performed in the temples

### **(1) Jalasayana Ēkādaśi Festival :**

This is also called 'Sayana Ēkādaśi' or Toli Ēkādaśi' or 'Prathama Ēkādaśi' in the Telugu month of 'Āshāḍha'. This is observed even now in all the temples. There are instances of charities made to the God on this day, which is considered holy. On the day of Prathama Ēkādaśi, the Vijayanagara King Sri Krishnadēvarāya made an endowment of land in the year 1529 A.D. for providing 'Aṅgarāṅga Bhōgas' and 'Dhūpa Dīpa Naivēdyas' to the God Ahōbala Sri Narasimhadēva.<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, an inscription of 1556 A.D. from Penna Ahobilam records the remission of certain taxes on 'Agrahāra' villages on this 'Ashādha Suddha Ēkādaśi, by the Mahāmaṇḍalēśwera Kōṇapadēva Mahā Araṣu during the reign of Sadāśiva.<sup>74</sup>

### **(2) Kārttika Punnama Festival :**

This is celebrated on the Kārttika Pournima every year. The festival is called 'Kārttika Dipōtsavam'. On this day *Akhaṇḍadīpa* is replaced by the new ones and the temple is illuminated with 'lamps'. The inscription of 1547 A.D. records the gift of money for providing eight offerings to Ahobilēśwara of Lower Ahobilam during the festival that comes on the 15<sup>th</sup> night in the Sukla Paksha of Kārttika.<sup>75</sup> This festival was celebrated by illuminating the temple with bright lamps collectively known as Kārttika Dipāvali and by offering special *Naivēdya* to the God.

### **(3) Śrī Jayanti Festival :**

This is the birth day of Narasimha Swamy that falls on the fourteenth day of the bright half of Vaisākha with 'Swāthi Nakshatram'. An epigraph of 1512 A.D. attesting this practice, says that one *Atiraśapadi*, (Special offering) was made to the God Alagiya Śingar abiding in Śrīnivāsapuram, a suburb of modern Tirupati, on the day of Śrī Jayanthi.<sup>76</sup>

### **(4) Vasanta Punnama Festival :**

This was a popular festival celebrated in the temple during the Vijayanagara period. The inscription of 1507 A.D. mentions the Vasanta Punnama as the Birth-Tīthi of Singer (Narasimha Swamy) and the *Atiraśapadi* was offered to the god on the birth-day<sup>77</sup> Another inscription of 1530 A.D. states that on the day of Vasanta

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pūṇima, Alagiya Śingar of Śrīnivāspuram was offered special *Naivēdya* on the day of Vasanta Pūṇima after the *Tirumanjanam* ( Sacred bath )<sup>78</sup>. The last inscription refers to the provision made for 'Tirumanjanam' to the God Alagiya Śinger by the Tāllapāka poets who lived in Tirupati in 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D <sup>79</sup>

### **(5) Kshīrābdhi Festival**

An epigraph of 1547 A.D states that a cash endowment was made for offerings to Vīra Narasimha of Ahōbīlam during the *Kshīrābdhi* festival that falls on the *Kārttika Suddha Dwādaśī* day. <sup>80</sup>

### **(6) Vijayadaśami Festival :**

This festival is referred to in an inscription of 1561 A.D. which states that a provision was made for offering to the God of Ahōbīlam Narasimha and his consort Lakshmi on the day of Vijayadaśami festival.<sup>81</sup>

### **(7) Parvatīthi Mahōtsavas :**

These were celebrated on the day of festivals These are referred to in an inscription of 1561 A.D. from the village Arakativēmula in Anantapūr District.<sup>82</sup>

### **(8) Tirunakshatras of Ālvārs :**

The birth starts of the twelve Ālvārs and of Śrī Rāmānujāchārya, the renowned Sri Vaishanava preceptor of 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D were celebrated in the Ahōbīlam temple every month, according to the inscription of 1561 A.D <sup>83</sup>

### **(9) Garden Festivals :**

These were probably *Vasanta-utsavas* celebrated in the month of (March-April) Chaitra, near a tank constructed by Van

Śaṭhagōpa jīyyar who gave a gift of land to Ahōbalēśwara of Lower Ahōbīlam in 1564 A.D. for specific offerings and their distribution during these festivals.<sup>84</sup>

**(10) Pañcha Parvas:**

The 'Pañcha Parvas' or the five festivals, according to an inscription of 1564 A.D. were celebrated for the God of Upper Ahōbīlam and the necessary provision was made for them by Parāṅkuśa Śrīman Śaṭhagōpa Jīyyangār of Ahōbīlam.

**(11) 220-Festival Days :**

Here, it is interesting to note that 220-festival days were celebrated to the god of Lower Ahōbīlam in a year. An undated epigraph from Lower Ahōbīlam, records that the Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Sūrapa Ōbulayadēva Maḥārāja planted the Garuḍa stambha in the street opposite to the temple and made a cash endowment for providing offerings to Narasimha on the 220 festival days in the year on which the deity was brought in a procession and seated on the platform of the Garuḍa Stambha.<sup>85</sup> We also note a cash endowment made by Śrī Pādudaiyar in 1524 A.D.<sup>86</sup> for food offerings to Tiruvēṅgadamudaiyān ( Śrī Venkateswara ) and Śrī Govindaraja Swamy in Tirumala - Tirupati.<sup>87</sup> It is stated that the days selected for festivals in Tirumala were 222 in number. It is not exaggeration to celebrate 220 or 222 festivals either at Ahōbīlam or at Tirumala, where there is a shrine for Narasimha within the temple of Śrī Venkateswara and offerings made to Śrī Venkateswara were also made to Yōga Narasimha on par with the Lord of the Seven Hills.

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Thus, the temples are the important centres where different people get together to witness the ceremonies on the eve of festivals. The festivals and rituals, in fact promoted the growth of the cult, help for the spread and popularity of the cult of Narasimha particularly in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

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54. *SII*, Vol. XVI, S No.299. & M Vol (SA), 100, Ahōbīlam Kaifiyat, pp 17-19
55. M Vol. (SA) No.269, pp.142-144. Saka year 1466 Corresponds to 1544 A.D. and plavaṅga, the Telugu year during



the reign of Sadāśiva corresponds to 1547-48 A.D. A mixture of tamarinds in water with which copper or brass image are secured This sacred function is known as "Pulikāpu Kainkaryam"

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## ICONOGRAPHY OF NARASIMHA

In iconography, Narasimha or Nṛsimha, one of the avatāras of Vishnu, is always represented in hybrid form. As the name itself indicates, it is a combination of Nara (Man) and Simha (Lion). This Man-Lion incarnation of Vishnu is more popular than the Varaha incarnation. In Tamil, the name is corrupted into Śiṅga (Sanskrit Śimha) or Śiṅga-Perumāḷ and in the other vernaculars into 'Narasa' (a contraction of Narasimha). The story of this incarnation of Vishnu given in the *Padma-purāṇa* *Vishnu-purāṇa* etc., is briefly as follows:

Hiranyākasha and Hiranyakaśipu were two demon brothers, naturally hostile to Vishnu. Hiranyākasha was killed by Vishnu in his Varāha incarnation. Hiranyakaśipu then became the king of the demons and vowed eternal war with Vishnu. His young son Prahlāda, however, became a devoted adherent of Vishnu and was always praising him as the all-pervading lord of the universe. Exasperated with this, Hiranyakaśipu asked the young boy whether his god Vishnu, if he was all-pervasive, could found in the pillar in front of him; and then hacked at it with his sword. The pillar cleft in twain and out burst from it, to the astonishment of Hiranyakaśipu, the angry god in the form of a Man-Lion, who forthwith tore Hiranyakaśipu with the claws at the time of lingering twilight<sup>1</sup>

Images of Narasimha are of five different types with minor variations, namely *Girijā*, *Yōga Sthauna*, *Anugraha* and *Dēvīśahita*. Again they may be divided as *Sthānaka* (Standing), *Āsīna* (seated), *lānaka* (nding) and *Nṛitya* (dancing)<sup>2</sup>. All the

forms of Narasimha, mentioned above are found in the temples under study. An interesting feature of iconography of Narasimha is that in the early medieval sculptures, the lion face is natural and later on in the Vijayanagara period, it is stylized.

The iconographical features of the above said forms found in the temples under study are given below

### **1. Kēvala Narasimha (Standing)**

According to the *Vaikhānasa Āgama*, the single image of Narasimha has either two or four arms. In the four armed icon, the upper right hand holds *cakra* (disc) and the upper left holds *śankha* (conch). The front two arms rest on the knees.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Śilparatna* and *Padmasamhita*, the *śankha* and *cakra* adorn the two out-stretched hands and the other two hands hold the *gada* (mace) and the *padma* (lotus).<sup>4</sup>

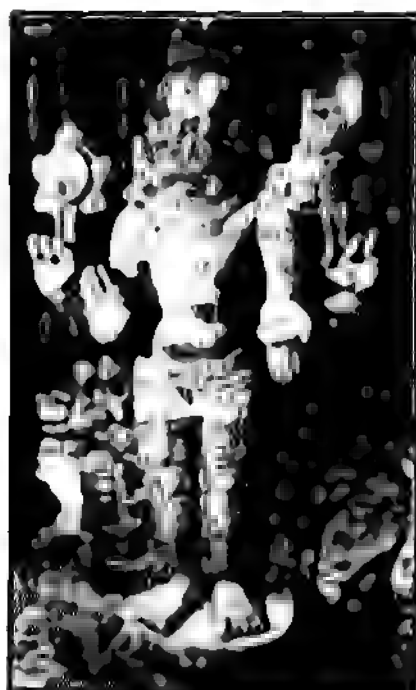
*No. 1* The image of Kēvala Narasimha in the *garbhagriha* of Narasimhaswamy temple of Upper Ahōbīlam is called Varāha (Krōdhākara) Narasimha Swamy. It is carved in black stone in the standing posture with a boar's mouth and the body of a man except the tail passing under the left knee. The deity has two arms, a wide mouth and open eyes with several ornaments on the waist. The image is of a frightful appearance.

The two-armed sculptures of Narasimha are found in the Pennahōbīlam and Kadiri temples of Anantapūr District. The four armed Narasimha is on a pillar in the *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* of Pennahōbīlam temple, which is 1'-3" inches high, facing the east. These sculptures are specimens of the Vijayanagara sculptural art.

*No. 1 (Plate. 3) The Rangamaṇḍapa* in the Tirumala temple contains

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

a group of Dasavatāra stone images of Vishnu. In this group, the god Varasimha is represented as standing in *varadhanga* with four arms. He holds *gada* and *kankha* in the upper arms and keeps the lower right in *abhaya* and the lower left in *varada*. He has open eyes, thick mane, open mouth with sharp teeth and wears *kūṭamukha*, *vaṣṭhapaṇḍita*, *bāra* girdle, *pāruṣṭuka* and *maṇḍara*.<sup>8</sup> This image is a product of the Vijayanagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



3 Kevata Narasimha, Tirumala, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## II. Girijā Narasimha (Āsīna or Seated)

The name 'Girijā Narasimha' denotes that the lion comes out of a mountain cave.<sup>6</sup> In the Girijā Narasimha form, the god is to be shown seated upon a *śimhāsana* in *vīrāsana*. The *Śilparatna* says that the seated image of Narasimha may have two or four hands. In the latter case, the god is to hold *cakra* and *śankha* in the two upper hands and keep the lower right in *abhaya* and the lower left at *kaṭi* or *gada* and *padma* in the lower right and lower left respectively. The *Padmapurāṇa* gives a vivid description of the deity thus - 'His face is that of a lion and the body of a human being. He has three eyes with a fierce face. He has four arms, holding a *cakra* in the upper right hand and a conch in the upper left hand and the other two lower hands rest on the knees.'<sup>7</sup> The '*Vishnudharmōttara*' gives a similar form as in the *Padmapurāṇa* besides the hair being flamboyant<sup>8</sup> and the body being surrounded by flames.

No. 1: The image of Girijā Narasimha under a tree known as 'Karanja Vṛuksham' is found on the Upper Ahōbīlam temple in the *padmāsana* posture. The canopy of a Nāga hood on the head is like an umbrella. He has four arms and holds *cakra* in the upper right and *śankha* in the upper left arm. His two hands are stretched forward and supported on the knees. He has thick mane surrounding his neck stretching on the chest also. His ears stand erect. He has three 'Nāmas' on the forehead. The image of the deity is in the meditation posture. This image is locally known as Karanja Narasimha in Ahōbīlam.

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

No. 2: In the lower Ahōbīlam, there is also another image of Girijā Narasimha. The image is under a tree known as Chatravaṭa. The image is represented as seated in *padmāsana* on a pedestal. The image has four arms. The upper right holds *cakra* and the upper left *śankha*. The lower right is in *abhaya* and the lower left arm is on his left thigh. He wears *karīṭamakuṭa*, *hāras*, *yajñōpavīta*, *kaṭibandha*, bracelets and anklets. This deity is called 'Chatravaṭa Narasimha' in Ahōbīlam.

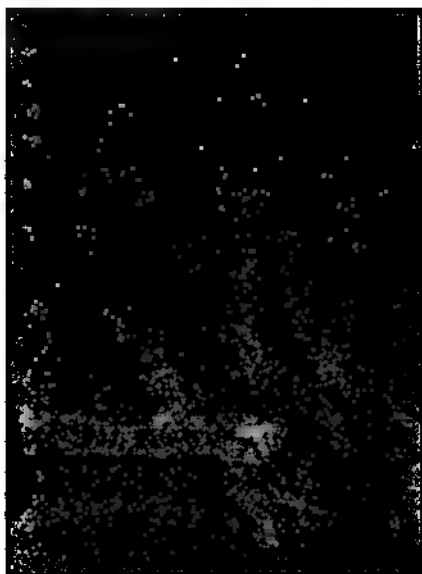
No. 3: (Plate 2): In the Srivenkateswara temple of Tirumala, there is a sculpture of Narasimha represented in animal form as a lion on a pillar in the *dvajastambha mantapa*. He has the head of a lion and the tail is raised up behind and the body is that of a human being. He sits on a pedestal. He has only two arms. He supports his right arm with his palm on his chest, while the left arm is holding the pennis which stands erect, with his fingers. This implies that he holds the sexual pleasures in control. He has thick mane around his head. He has protruding eyes, erected ears, puffed up cheeks and lolling tongue. This sculpture is a specimen of 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There are two more sculptures in animal representation on the pillars of the Yōga Narasimha shrine in the Sri Venkateswara temple of Tirumala.



2. Girijā Narasimha, Tirumala, 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No. 4 (Plate. 4):** The *pavitrōstava maṇḍapa* in the Sri Venkateswara temple of Tirumala contains in one of its pillars a sculpture of Girijā Narasimha. This sculpture is about 10 inches in height. In this sculpture, the god is represented as seated on a pedestal in the *rājalīlāsana*. The god has four arms and holds *cakra* and *śankha* in the upper right and upper left respectively. His lower right arm is resting on the raised knee and the fingers hanging down and his lower left arm is resting on the pedestal. He has thick mane, bulging cheeks and open mouth. He wears a *makuṭa*, *hāra*, *udarabandha*, *yagnōpavīta*, *kaṭibandha*, and *pūrṇōruka*. He also wears *armlets*, *wrists*, *anklets* and *bhujakīrtis*. This sculpture is datable to the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.





4. Girijā Narasimha, Tirumala, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

The four-armed images of Girijā Narasimha are also found in the temples at Peddamudiyam in Cuddapah District, Pennahōbīlam and Kadiri in Anantapūr District, Tirumala in Chittoor District and Lower Ahōbīlam and Upper Ahōbīlam in Kurnool District.

No. 5 (Plate.5): The eight armed sculpture of Girijā Narasimha is found on a pillar in *kalyānamandapa* of the Sri Venkatesvara Temple of Tirumala. This is a very rare sculpture of Narasimha seated on a lion. He folds his left leg and the right foot hangs down in an *ardhaparyāṅka* posture. He has the face similar to that of a lion and eight arms. From the top on the right side, the uppermost arm holds a *cakra*, the next two arms have weapons, and the lowest

*The Cult of Varasinha in Kavalanama*

right arm is raised up to the *abhaya*. On the left side, the uppermost arm holds the *khanda* and the next two arms have some weapons and the lowest left arm is in *varada*. The face rolling eyes, closed ears, bulging cheeks and open mouth and wears ornaments like *malas*, *vanamala*, *garuda*, *chakra* and *malas* and *chakra* etc. This is a rare sculpture and actually rare elsewhere. The sculpture is of the *Varasinha* art of 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



1. Lord Varasinha sculpture 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### **III. Yōga-Narasimha:**

In the Yōga-Narasimha form, the deity should be shown seated on a *padmāsana* in *utkutika* posture, the forelegs being maintained in the required position by the *yōga-paṭṭa* going round them and the back of the body.<sup>9</sup>

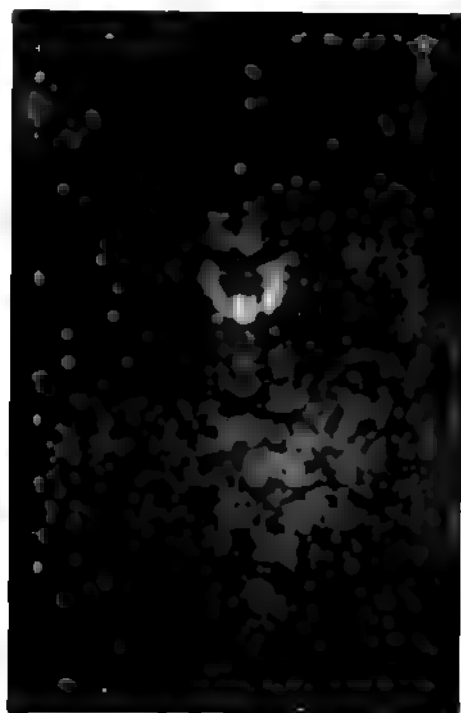
**No.1:** The sanctum of the Yōga Narasimha temple at Peddamuḍiyam, Cuddapah district, contains a stone image of Yōga Narasimha. It is 2'-6" high with a Lion's head and a human body with four arms. He sits with crossed legs and raising his knees upright and supporting his feet on the pedestal on which he is seated and the *yōga-paṭṭa* belt passing through the knees, maintains the legs in the required position. He holds *'saṅkha* and *cakra* in his upper arms, his two lower arms are stretched forward and supported on the knees. He has a thick mane and hair on his head. He has bulging eyes, cheeks and a wide open mouth with the tongue protruding out. There are two prominent sharp tusks or teeth on both sides of the mouth. He has three 'Nāmas' on the forehead, a 'Sālagrāma mālā' and wears bracelets and anklets.

**No.2.** There are two loose sculptures of Yōga Narasimha in the Yōga Narasimha temple at Peddamuḍiyam. These sculptures, on the basis of stylistic features, can be assigned to the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Of them, in the first sculpture (**Plate 6**) the god is seated with legs crossed and holds *cakra* in the upper right hand, *'saṅkha* in the upper left and keeps the two lower hands stretched forward and supported on the knees. He has thick mane and wears a necklace, *kēyuras*, *kaṅkaṇas*, wristlets and anklets.



6. Yōga Narasimha, Paddamudiyam, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No.3. (Plate 7):** The god in the second sculpture is seated with the legs crossed and bound by a *yōga-patta* below the knees and has four hands. The contents in the upper hands, the postures of the lower hands and the ornaments are similar to the sculpture described above .



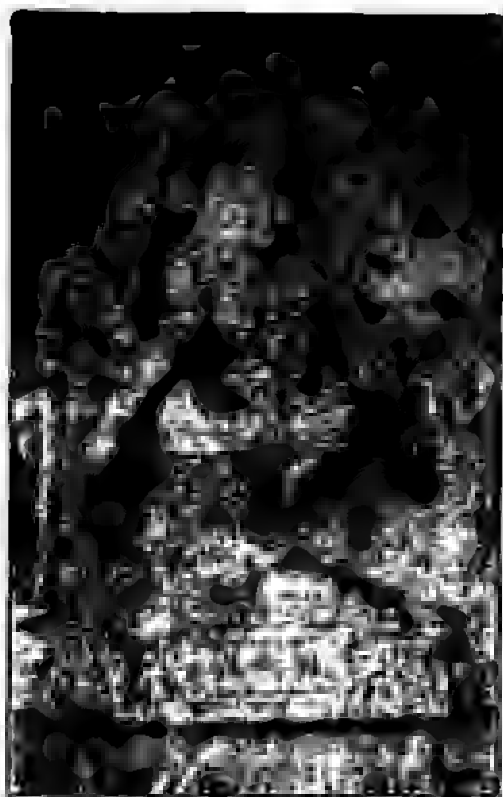
6. Vöga-Narasimha, Peddarnavuram, 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

No.4. (Fig. 2). The *garbhagruha* of the Narasimha shrine within the temple of Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala, contains a four-armed stone image of Vöga-Narasimha. It is 1' 6" in the height facing the west. He sits cross-legged on a pedestal, supporting his feet on it, raising his knees upright with the *vöga-patta* belt passing round his knees. This image has *chakra* and *vanaka* in the upper right and left hands respectively, while the lower hands rest on the knees with fingers hanging down. He has a mane around his neck. He has erected

ears, open eyes, bulging cheeks and a wide open mouth with two prominent tusks. He wears a *makūṭa*, armlets, wristlets and anklets. The deity is in 'Saumya' form. This image betrays Vijayanagara workmanship and may be dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No.5.** There is an image of Yōga Narasimha in the Sanctum of the Lower Ahōbīlam temple. The deity sits in a cross-legged posture with the *yōga-paṭṭa* belt going round the knees. He is four-armed and resembles in every respect the image of S.NO.2 described above. He wears a lengthy *makūṭa* and a cloth to his waist.

**No.6 (plate 8):** There is a four-armed sculpture of Yōga Narasimha on a pillar in the *kalṅkāmaṇḍapa* of the Śrī Venkateswara temple of Tirumala. It is about one foot high, facing the north. In this sculpture, the god is in the *utkuṭika* posture with the *yōga-paṭṭa* belt passing round the knees. He has four arms. He carries *cakra* in the upper right, *śarkha* in the upper left and the two lower hands are stretched forward over his knees. He has stylised mane, wide open eyes, protruberant cheeks and an open mouth. He is decorated with *kīrīṭamakūṭa*, *hāras*, *yaśṇōpavīta*, *kaṭibandha*, *bhujakīrtis*, armlets, wristlets and anklets. He is in a calm yogic posture. This sculpture belongs to the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



A. Yuga Narasimha, Tirumala, 17th century A.D.

Fig. 1 (Plate 9): The Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Rutili, Andhra Pradesh, contains a standing four-armed sculpture of Yuga Narasimha. The iconographic features of this sculpture resemble in all respects the sculpture of Yuga Narasimha (Fig. A) of Tirumala described above.

No. 8 (Plate 10). There is another unique four armed sculpture of Vīṣṇu-Narasimha in a pillar in the 4<sup>th</sup> of the Narasimha temple at Kadur. Seated with the legs crossed, the god holds *śaṣṭra* in the upper right hand, *bandha* in the upper left and keeps his feet on two hands on the knees. He wears *śaṅkha* and other ornaments. An interesting iconographic feature of this sculpture is that the deity is shown flanked by his two consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi who are in the standing posture. The goddesses stand in *abhaya* and hold a flower in one hand and keep the other hanging. The above described two sculptures of Narasimha (Plate Nos. 9 & 10) are datable to the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



V. Vīṣṇu-Narasimha, Kadur, 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.





10 Yōga Narasimha, Kallur, 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

No.9: There is yet another sculpture of Yōga Narasimha in the Lower Ahobilam Temple in Kurnool District. This is found on a pillar and it is 2 feet in height, facing the north. In this example, the god is seated in the *utkapāṭa* posture with the *yōga-paṭṭa* round the knees. He has four arms, holding *śakra* (broken) in his upper right and *danda* in his upper left arm. The two lower arms are stretched forward and are supported on the knees. He has stylised *maṇḍita* around his neck. He wears *kṛtāmakaṭa*, *nāmam* a necklace, *udarabandha*, *vajradhara* armlets and rings on the fingers.

#### IV Sthauna Narasimha :

The word 'Sthauna' is derived from the word 'Sthana' (stambha or pillar). As Narasimha came out of a pillar he is called 'Sthauna Narasimha'.<sup>10</sup> According to the *Vaikhāṇasaśāstra*, Sthauna Narasimha should stand in *tribhūga* and have twelve or

sixteen hands. On his left thigh Hiranyakaśipu should be stretched out with the belly being ripped open by two of the hands of Narasimha. One of the right hands should be in *abhaya* and another should carry a sword so as to make its point reach up to the *kundala* in the ear. One of the left hands of Narasimha should hold the *makuta* of Hiranyakaśipu and other should be shown lifted up for administering a blow to the demon. The legs of *āsura* are to be taken hold of by a right hand and two other hands, one right and one left should be lifted up to the ears of the image and holding the drawn out entrails of Hiranyakaśipu in the form of a garland. The figure of the god should be sculptured so as to indicate that he has been attempting to kill the demon and be armed with a sword and shield. If the figure of the deity is shown with only eight arms, two of them should be employed in tearing open the belly of Hiranyakaśipu, while other four hands should carry *śaṅkha*, *gada*, *cakra* and *padma*. The remaining two hands should be holding the drawn out entrails of Hiranyakaśipu garland-wise.<sup>11</sup>

In the temples, a large number of sculptures represent either the combat between the god and the demon or killing of the latter by the former. In addition, as per the sculptures available in the temples, other representation is that of Narasimha shown as coming out of a column. The Sthauna Narasimha is shown in the temples in the following three stages .

- (a) Stambōdbhava Narasimha.
- (b) Narasimha Fighting the demon Hiranyakaśipu and
- (c) Vidāraṇa Narasimha (Narasimha killing the demon).

## Iconography of Narasimha

The description of 'Stambōdbhava Narasimha' is given in the Narasimha and Matsya Purāṇas, *Nārāyaṇīyam*, *Āndhra Bhāgavatham* of poet Pōtana and also in the Tamil hymns of Tirumangaī Ālvar.<sup>12</sup> *Matsya Purāṇa* gives a vivid description of the second stage, the god fighting the demon with eight hands and the demon with a sword and the shield.<sup>13</sup>

Vidāraṇa Narasimha has been described in the *Vishnu Dharmōttara purāṇa* as tearing the bosom of Hiranya Kaśipu with sharp claws.<sup>14</sup>

**Five stone images of Sthauna Narasimha are described below:**

**No. 1:** The image of Sthauna Narasimha, about 2 feet in height, facing the east is in the Cave - garbhagriha of the Upper Ahōbīlam temple. The god is seated in *virāsana* on a pedestal. The demon is lifted up and stretched across the god's lap. His head is placed on the right lap and legs on the left thigh of the god who has only two arms, holding the head of the demon with his right hand and the right thigh of the demon with his left hand. The god has open eyes, puffed-up cheeks and open mouth with curved teeth. He wears a round *makuta*, *yajñōpavīta* and a *sālagrāmamāla*. Below the demon, Prahlāda is standing. The image of the god exhibits the fierce aspect.

**No. 2:** The sanctum of Bhārgava Narasimha temple on the Upper Ahōbīlam, contains an image of Sthauna Narasimha. It is carved on a black stone with *prabhāvali* on which the ten incarnations of Vishnu are sculptured out from right to left. The god is seated in *sukhāsana* on a pedestal. The demon is shown on the lap of the god and the head of the demon is placed on the right thigh. The god has four hands, holding *cakra* and *śankha* in his upper right and left hands

respectively. While his lower hands are engaged in tearing open the stomach of the demon. The demon holds a sword in his right hand which is held by the right leg of the god. Below the left thigh of the god is Prahlāda standing in *anyali*. This image is popularly called 'Bhārgava Narasimha'.

**No. 3:** Another image which is 4 ft. high is in the garbhagriha of the Ugra Narasimha temple at Peddamudiyam in Cuddāpha District. It is carved on a black stone along with *prabhāvali* on which ten incarnations of Vishnu are sculptured from right to left. The god sits on a pedestal in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. The demon is on the lap of the god. The head of the demon is kept on the left thigh of the god and his legs are dangling free from the knees. The god has eight arms. His upper most arms hold the intestines of the demon in the form of garland, the next pair of arms hold *cakra* and *śankha* and the third pair has a sword and a shield in the right and left arms respectively. The last two arms are engaged in opening the stomach of the demon. The god has thick mane, rolling eyes, bulging cheeks and wide open mouth with two prominent canine teeth. He wears several ornaments. The demon holds a shield in his left arm and a sword in his right arm in striking posture. The god looks fierce.

**No. 4:** Yet another image of Sthauna Narasimha is in the sanctum of the Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Kadiri in Anantapur district. It is also 2 ft. high, facing the east. The god sits on a pedestal crossing his feet and resting his toes on the same pedestal. The demon is shown horizontally across the lap of the god. The head of the demon is placed on the right thigh and the legs on the left lap of the god who is shown in action of tearing out the entrails of the demon with his

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

finger-nails. The god has eight arms. In the right arms, from top, there are *cakra* and sword in the first two hands and *śaṅkha* and a shield in the first two left arms respectively. His third right arm holds the head of demon and the left holds the two legs of the demon. The last two arms with finger-nails are involved in the act of rending the entrails of the demon. The god has mane around the neck, open eyes, bulging cheeks, erected ears, lolling tongue and moustache. He is adorned with *nāmas*, a tall *kirīṭamakūṭa*, *yajñōpavīta*, *udarabandha* and *hāras*. An inscription, dated in 1352 A.D. states the Lakshmi Narasimha temple of Kadūr was built by a Nāyaka in that year. Hence, this image of Sthauna Narashimha may well be taken to belong to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A.D

**No. 5:** A small natural mountain - cave contains 3' high stone sculpture of Sthauna Narasimha (Jvāla Narasimhaswamy) on Upper Ahōbilam. The god has ten arms and is in the *sukhāsana* pose with his left leg folded and the right leg hanging down freely. His upper arms hold *cakra* and *śaṅkha*. Two arms hold the demon, Hiranyakaśipu. Other hands are holding and also tearing out the intestines of the demon. The devotee, Prahlāda is in the *anjali*hasta pose to the right side.

The pillar sculptures of (a) Stambōdbhava Narasimha (b) God fighting the demon, Hiranyakaśipu and (c) Vidārāṇa Narasimha are described below:

#### **(A) Stambōdbhava Narasimha:**

**No.1:** On a pillar in the *kalyāṇamandapa* of Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Pennahōbilam in Anantapur district, there is the sculpture of Stambōdbhava Narasimha, one foot tall facing the north. The

god is represented as coming out of the pillar. His body can be seen only upto the waist. He has four arms and holds *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in the upper arms and his two lower arms rest on the pillar. The god has mane around his neck, bulging eyes and cheeks. He is adorned with a round *kirīṭamakuṣa*, a necklace, a *hāra* and *udarabandha*. To his left, the demon is found kicking the pillar with his left leg. He holds a sword in his right arm in a striking posture and a shield in his left arm. The god looks frightful. Prahlāda stands in 'arjyalimudra' to his right under the lower arm of the deity.

**No. 2 (Plate 11):** The sculpture of Stambōdbhava Narasimha is also found on a central pillar to the left of the *mukhamanḍapa* of the Lakshmi shrine within the Narasimha temple at Kadiri in Anantapur district. This sculpture is one foot high. The god is shown as coming out of the pillar, exposing only the left part of his body. He comes forward outstretching his left leg towards the demon. The god has probably eight arms, but the left four arms are distinct. He holds certain deadly weapons in his upper three arms and in the last arm i.e. the front arm is hanging down obliquely with the fingers projecting down. To the left of the god, Prahlāda is standing with folded hands. To the extreme left of the god, beside Prahlāda, the demon is standing with outstretched sword in his right arm. The god has thick mane, protruding eyes, bulging cheeks and wide open mouth. He wears a pointed *makuṣa*, *kaṭibandha* and piece of cloth on his waist. The deity looks in *ugra-rūpa*. This sculpture belongs to the early Vijayanagara art of 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



11 Stambodbhava Narasimha, Kadiri, 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**No.3. (Plate 12):** Another sculpture of Stambodbhava Narasimha is found at Ahobilam. Narasimha has the human body and the face of a lion and is shown coming out of the pillar. He has four arms and holds *cakra* in the upper right arm and *shankha* in the upper left. The lower arms are shown clasped together below the girdle. He wears *kiritamakuta*, *yajnopavita*, *mala* and girdle. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara sculptural art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



12. Stambōdbhava Narasimha,  
Lower Ahōbīlam 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**No. 4 (Plate 13):** Yet another sculpture of Stambōdbhava Narasimha is found on a pillar in the *mandapa* to the north of the *pushkarinī* (tank) of the *kapilēśvara* temple at the foot of the Tirumala Hills. The iconographic features of this sculpture resembles in all respects the sculpture (No.3) of Stambōdbhava Narasimha of Ahōbīlam described above. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.





13. Stambodbhava Narasimha, Kapilatirtham, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### **B. Narasimha Fighting the Demon Hiranyakasipu**

The sculptures of Narasimha fighting the demon Hiranyakasipu are described below. In this type of representation, the god is represented with four, six and eight arms in the sculptures.

**No.1 (Plate 14):** The four armed sculpture of Narasimha fighting the demon is found in the temple at Upper Ahobīlam. It is about 1'6" in height. The god holds *cakra* in the upper right arm and *śankha* in the upper left arm. He holds the *makuta* of the demon in his lower right arm and the lower left holds the waist of the demon. The god and the demon are standing and the right leg of god is interlocked with that of the right leg of the demon. The demon holds a shield in his left arm and holds a sword in his right arm. The god has thick mane, protruding eyes, a wide open mouth and puffed-up cheeks with a fierce look.



14. Narasimha Fighting the Demon Hiranyakaśipu,  
Upper Ahōbīlam, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No.2 (Plate 15):** A pillar in the Rangamaṇḍapa of the Tirumala temple contains a sculpture of Narasimha fighting the demon. This sculpture depicts a hand to hand fight between the god and demon in the standing position. The god has four arms. His back arms are raised up in a striking position, while his front right arm is holding the waist of the demon and the left holds the *makuta* of the demon. The god places his left leg in between the legs of the demon, obstructing the movement of the demon's left leg. The demon looks back in desperation. The god has thick mane, bulging eyes, girdle and anklets. Two sculptures of this type are found on the pillars in the temple of Narasimha at Lower Ahōbīlam and another sculpture is found carved on a pillar in front of the entrance of the Narasimha temple at Pennahōbīlam in Anantapūr district. This sculpture is assignable to the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>15</sup>



15 Narasimha, Fighting the Demon Hiranyakasipu,  
Tirumala, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No. 3.** The six armed sculpture is found on a pillar in the *kahāṇamandapa* of the Tirumala temple. It is 1' 3". This sculpture depicts the god fighting with the demon, face to face.

**No.4. (Plate 16):** The eight armed sculpture of god fighting the demon is found on a pillar in the *mahamandapa* of the Ugra Narasimha temple at Peddamadhyam in Cuddapah district. It is 1' 3" in height, facing the south. This sculpture belongs to the Vijayanagara period, about 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



16. Narasimha Fighting the Demon Hiranyakaśipu,  
Poddamudiyam, 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### **C. Vidāraṇa Narsimha (Narasimha Killing the Demon)**

The six armed sculptures of Vidāraṇa Narasimha are found at Poddamudiyam (Yōga Narasimha Temple) in Cuḍḍapah district, in the Narasimha temple at Periahōbīlam in Anantapur district and in the Tirumala temple in Chittoor district.

No.1: Eight armed sculptures of Vidāraṇa Narasimha are five in number. The first is on a pillar, beside the central four pillared *maṇḍapa*, towards left in the *Raṅgamaṇḍapa* of the Lower Ahōbīlam temple. It is 2 ft. in height. The god sits on a pedestal.

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

The demon is shown horizontally across the god's lap. The god has eight arms. The upper most arms hold the drawn out entrails of the demon in a garland shape. The next two arms hold *cakra* and *śankha* and the third row of right arms is in action opening the stomach of the demon. The last right arms holds the *makūṭa* of the demon and the other two legs of the demon together. The god has his usual terrific features. The god wears a number of ornaments. At the feet of the god, is Garuda kneeling with raised arms to support the feet of the god. Prahlāda stands in the *añjalimudra* below the right knee of the god.

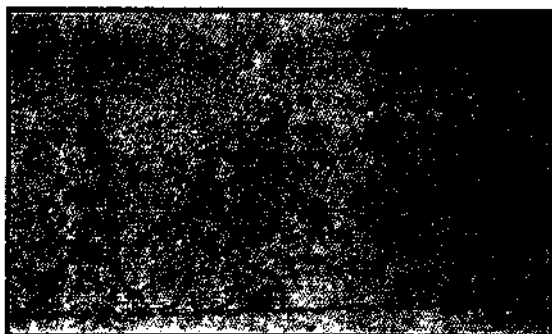
The four other eight armed sculptures of Vidāraṇa Narasimha, are found at Peddamudayam (Ugra Narasimha Temple) in Cuddapah district, Kadiri in Anantapur District, Tirumala in Chittoor district and Upper Ahobilam in Kurnool District.

**No.2 (Plate 17):** The Varāha shrine at Tirumala contains on its outer wall an eight armed sculpture of Vidāraṇa Narasimha. The deity is in *ardhaparyāṅkāsa*. The demon is placed horizontally across the god's lap. The head of the demon is kept on the left lap of the god and the legs of the demon stretched straight on the right thigh of the god. The god has eight hands. The upper most hands hold the drawn out entrails of the demon in the form of a garland. The next two hands are lifted up and the third pair of hands is holding the leg and the *makūṭa* of the demon. The first two hands are shown opening the stomach of the demon. The god has protruding eyes, puffed-up cheeks. He wears *makūṭa* and several ornaments. This sculpture is datable to 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



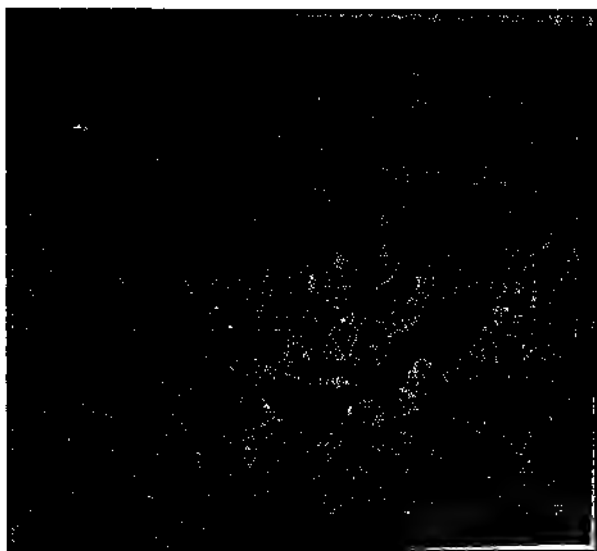
17. Vidāraṇa Narasimha, Tirumala, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**No.3 (Plate 18):** In the temple of Upper Ahōbīlam, Vidāraṇa Narasimha is shown in two stages. In the first stage, Narasimha and Hiraṇyakaśipu are shown engaged in fighting. Narasimha has four hands. He holds *cakra* and *śankha* in the upper hands and catches Hiraṇyakaśipu with the other two hands. Another demon is shown standing with sword, shield in his hands, to the right side of Hiraṇyakaśipu, and in the second stage, Narasimha is shown tearing open the stomach of Hiraṇyakaśipu. He is seated in *vīrāsana* keeping Hiraṇyakaśipu on his thighs. He has eight hands and opens the stomach of Hiraṇyakaśipu with the front two hands. The uppermost hands hold the entrails of the demon in the form of a garland. The next pair of hands carry *cakra* and *śankha* and the third pair of hands hold the legs and the *makūṭa* of the demon. This sculpture belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



18. Vidārana Narasimha, Upper Ahōbīlam, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

**No. 4 (Plate 19):** There is a sixteen armed sculpture of Vidārana Narasimha on a pillar in the *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* of Śrī Venkateswara temple in Tirumala. The god sits in the '*ardhaparyāṅka*' posture. The demon is stretched across the lap of the god. His head is placed on the right lap of the god. The god has sixteen hands. He holds out the entrails in his upper most arms in the form of a garland. The second pair of arms, from the top, is raised in striking posture. The next two arms hold *cakra* and '*śankha*'. Fourth and fifth pair of arms hold the *kṛtāmakutaś* of couple of demons who are attacking the demon. The sixth pair of arms is holding a sword and shield. The seventh right arm holds the *makuta* of the demon Hiranyakaśipu and the left, the legs of the demon together. The last pair of arms i.e. the front two arms are shown ripping open the bosom of the demon. The god has thick mane and protruding eyes and bulging cheeks, which gives him fierce look. He wears a number of ornaments. This is a rare sculpture depicting the ferocious (Ugra) form Narasimha. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



19. Vidāraṇa Narasimha, Tirumala, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D

#### **V. Lakshmi Narasimha :**

The form of Śrī Lakshmi Narasimha has been vividly described in *Skanda Purāṇa*,<sup>16</sup> *Nārādīya Mahapurāṇa*<sup>17</sup> and *Rūpadhyāna Ratnavālī*,<sup>18</sup> as seated with his consort Lakshmi in his lap. The latter text says that "He is embraced by his consort, Lakshmi. He has four hands. He holds *cakra* and *śankha* in his upper right and upper left hands respectively. While his lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left is in *varada* posture.

The images and sculptures of Lakshmi Narasimha are found at Gooty and Pennahōbīlam in Anantapūr district, Ahōbīlam in Kumdōl district and Kapilatīrtham at the foot of Tirumala Hills in Chittoor district. They are described below.



### *Iconography of Narasimha*

**No.1: (Plate 20)** The *garbhagriha* of Lakshmi Narasimha swamy temple on the hill at Gooty in Anantapur district contains an image of Lakshmi Narasimha. It is 2<sup>1</sup>-6" high facing the east. The god has the conopy of a five headed Naga, like an umbralla and nimbus behind his head. The god sits in *lalitāsana* and has four arms, holding *cakra* and *śankha* in his upper right and left respectively, while his lower right is in *abhaya* and the lower left is taken round the waist of Lakshmi. He has open eyes, bulging cheeks and a wide open mouth. The god and his consort wear *makuta*s and several ornaments. Since the image of Lakshmi Narasimha is said to have been consecrated by King Bukka (1344-77 A.D.), it can be dated to belong to the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



20 Lakshmi Narasimha, Gutti, 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**No. 27 (Plate 28).** There is another temple in the same area of Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Perambalur in Anaimalai district. It is 3 feet high, being the size in the same measure. The same pattern, like the Lakshmi and Lord Venkateswara are visible in it. According to tradition, the Lakshmi Narasimha temple was built by Lord Rameswara, son-in-law of King Ravana. The temple Lakshmi Narasimha may be dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



27. Lakshmi Narasimha, Perambalur, 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

**No.3:** The four feet tall Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup> Narasimha image facing the east, is in the *garbhagriha* of the Lower Ahōbīlam temple. It is carved on a black stone along with *prabhāvali*. Over the head of the god, is a seven-headed Adisesha, like an umbrellā. The deity is in the '*lalitāsana*' with four arms which are similar to S No 1. Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup> is seated with legs hanging down freely, on the left folded leg of the god. The god wears *kirītamakuta* necklaces and *hāras*. So is his consort in her ornaments. This image is of the Vijayanagara period, about 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**No.4:** There is a Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup> Narasimha sculpture in the *garbhagriha* of Malōla Narasimha shrine on the Upper Ahōbīlam. The god is in *lalitāsana*, with four arms which are similar to No 2. He wears a pointed *makuta* a *hāra*, bracelets and anklets.

**No.5:** There is also another image in the sanctum of Pavana Narasimha temple on the Upper Ahōbīlam. This is also in the *lalitāsana* on the coils of Adisesha, with four arms which are similar to the No 1 except the lower left arm which is taken round the back of his consort and supporting on her left arm.

**No.6 (Plate. 22):** The cave shaped shrine in the Kapilēśvara temple at Kapilātīrtham at the foot of Tirumala Hills, contains an image of Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup> Narasimha of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The god is seated on a *pīṭha* with his right leg hanging and the left leg folded at the knee and resting on the seat. He has four arms of which the upper right arm is broken. He holds *śaṅkha* in the upper left arm, keeps the lower right arm in *abhaya* and the lower left passes round the back his consort Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup>. He wears a *makuta* and several other ornaments. Lakshmi<sup>̄</sup> is seated on the left thigh of the god with her

leg; resting on a seat below. She holds a lotus in her left arm and passes her right arm round the back of the god. She wears *karandamakuṭa*, *kucabanidha* and *pūrnōruka*.<sup>19</sup> This image, is a product of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



22. Lakshmi Narasimha, Kapilāṭīrtham, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## Iconography of Narayana

No. 7 (Pl. 23). One of the rulers on the *Khajuraho* temple (The Sri Venkateswara temple, Tirumala) carries a conchshell (Lakṣmī Narayana). The god and the goddess form a pair and possess the same sex. The sculpture resembles in all respects the sculpture of Lakṣmī Narayana described here:



Pl. 23. Lakṣmī Narayana, Tirumala, 16th century A.D.

## **VII. Yōgānanda Lakshmi Narasimha :**

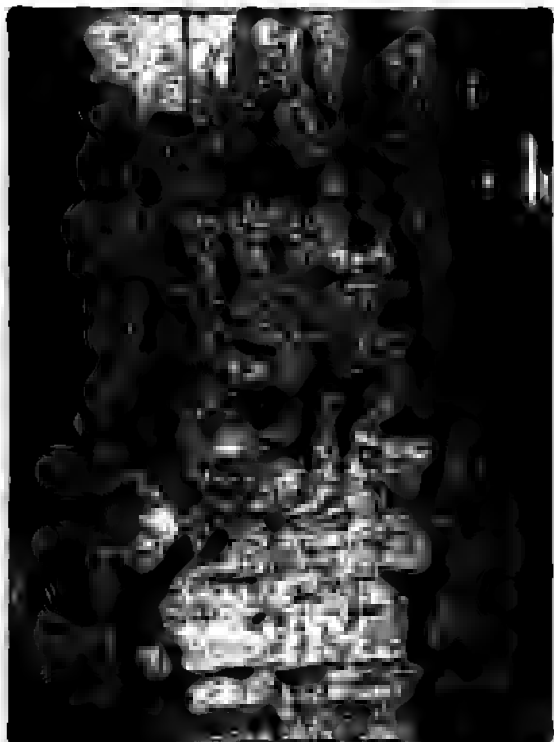
**No.1:** In this sculptural representation, the combination of 'yōga' and 'bhōga' (seated Lakshmi on the lap) is very rare. This very rare sculpture is found on a pillar beside the central four pillared *mandapa*, to the left in the *Raṅgamaṇḍapa* of Lower Ahōbīlam temple, showing the 'Yōga' and 'Bhōga' (with Lakshmi on the lap) aspects of the god. This sculpture is about 11 -6" and faces the east. The god sits on the coils of Adisēsha. The *yōga-paṭṭa* belt runs from the knees to the waist, maintaining his legs in the required position. The god has four arms. His upper right arm is broken and his upper left holds an arrow and bow. The lower right is in *abhaya* and the lower left passes round the hip of Lakshmi. The absence of *karīṇamakuta* is the conspicuous feature here. The god and Lakshmi wear a number of ornaments. This sculpture is a specimen of the Vijayanagara sculptural art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## **VIII. Varāha Lakshmi Narasimha**

**No.1 (Plate. 24)** This is also another rare type of image of Narasimha with the mouth of a boar or Varāha described as 'Bhūvaraha' in the iconographic texts. This is found on a pillar beside the central four-pillared *mandapa* in the Lower Ahōbīlam temple. It is 21-6" high, facing the north. The god has the face of a 'krodha' (Varāha or Boar). He sits in the *lalitāsana*. His consort Lakshmi is seated on the left lap of the god with her legs hanging down. The god has four arms, holding *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in his upper right and left arms respectively. The lower right is *abhaya* and the lower left passes round the back of Lakshmi. There are three *Nāmas* on the forehead. The god and goddess wear several ornaments. This image, is a product of florid Vijayanagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### *Iconography of Narasimha*

No. 2: There is another Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha sculpture on a pillar in the first mudhavarappara of the Maheswara temple in Upper Abbilahalli. It is similar to No. 1 described above and is an example of the Vijaynagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



2A. Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha,  
Upper Abbilahalli, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

**IX. Prahlādanugrahamūrti :**

**No.1:** The god Narasimha blessing Prahlāda with his hand is known as 'Prahlādanugrahamūrti'. This type of images are rare and has no sanction of the Āgama Sāstras. One example of Prahlādanugrahamūrti is described below. This is found on the second pillar, on the left side in the *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* of the Pennahōbīlam temple of Anantapūr district. It is one foot in height and has two arms. The god is standing on a pedestal with his right arm hanging down and the left arm resting (blessing) on the head of Prahlāda who is standing with folded hands on the same pedestal. The god has the head of the a lion without *makūṭa*. This sculpture is of 16<sup>th</sup> century A D.

**X Narasimha Wooing Chēnchita (Plate.25) :**

The representation of Narasimha with Chēnchita (a Chēnchu tribe woman) also has no Āgama sanction. But there are three sculptures of god Narasimha wooing Chēnchita. These belong to florid Vijayanagara art of 16<sup>th</sup> century A D.

**No.1:** One of the pillars of the *mukhamaṇḍapa* of Ugra Narasimha temple in Peddamudiyam of Cuddapah district, contains a sculpture of Narasimha wooing Chēnchita. This sculpture is 11-3" in height. The god is in the wooing posture with Chēnchita, who is standing beside him. The god holds a bow in the right arm, while the left arm rests on the waist. The face of Chēnchita is broken completely.

**No.2:** Another sculpture of Narasimha wooing Chēnchita is found on a pillar in the *mukhamaṇḍapa* of the Upper Ahōbīlam temple. It is one foot in height and is similar to No.1. Chēnchita bends at the waist to the right side. Both the god and Chēnchita hold bows in their left and right arms and wear several ornaments.





25. Narasimha standing Chandralekha,  
Lower Abolisham, 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

No.3 (Plate 25): The stone sculpture is found on a pillar in the Rajagomandapa at Lower Abolisham. It is 2 m height, facing the east. The god is shown begging Chandralekha who is in an angry mood. The god has four arms and holds conch and mace in the upper

arms. The lower right hand is touching her chin with his palm entreating her earnestly and the other hand passes round her and rests on the lower part of her breast. She has a bow in her left hand. Her left leg is bent and supports her toes on the ground and raising her ankle. The god and Chēnchita wear a number of ornaments. Chēnchita looks angry and is adamant towards the god.

A survey of the temples of Narasimha under study reveals that the various forms of Narasimha namely Kēvala, Gīrijā, Yōga, Sthauna and Lakshmī Narasimha have been well represented iconographically. Even the other forms of Narasimha such as Prahlādanugrahamūrti, Yōgānanda Narasimha, Varāha Lakshmī Narasimha and Narasimha wooing Chēnchita which are not mentioned in the Āgama sastras are also well depicted in the temples under study. Again, during the period of study, in general, the form of Lakshmī Narasimha was more popular than the other forms of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. Further, the study of the iconographic features of various forms of Narasimha reveals that in the above mentioned varieties, majority of the sculptures of Narasimha conform to the iconographic texts while the rest partially differ from the requirements of the texts. This shows that the sculptors did not strictly adhere to the requirements of the texts.

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## CONCLUSION

The Narasimha cult is related to the fourth incarnation of Vishnu. This cult is an important and popular one throughout Andhra Pradesh. It has a special place in the cultural history of Rāyalaseema. Traditions of Narasimha cult are best seen today at Ahōbīlam, Pennahōbīlam, Kadirī, Gutti, Peddamudrīyam, Tarigondā, Tirumala and other centres in Rāyalaseema. Many in Rāyalaseema carry the names of Ahōbīlam, Pennahōbīlam or Kadirī and the cult has tremendously influenced the social life of the region. In Rāyalaseema, there are eighty eight temples dedicated to Narasimha of which forty four are referred to in the inscriptions. The inscriptions help us to trace out the growth of the cult and significance of the select temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu is considered to be a 'Divyāvātāra' in comparison to the earlier incarnations of Vishnu i.e. Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha. The Narasimha incarnation is an anthropomorphic form, combining the Man - Lion features. The study of images and sculptures of Narasimha shows that god Narasimha was regarded as one of the most favourite incarnations of Vishnu in the four districts of Rāyalaseema. Here god Narasimha occupies the position of a cult deity rather than remaining merely an incarnation of Vishnu. There are certain *bījāksharas* (seed words), *stavas* and *mantrās* with which the god is worshipped and invoked. Besides, certain tantric procedure plays an important role in the worship of this deity. There is a strong belief among the devotees that if the god is worshipped and invoked in accordance

with the Tantric procedure uttering seed words, *stavas* and *mantrās* with sincere and constant devotion, the god showers favours upon the devotees. He is worshipped in particular to cure the diseases, destroy the enemies, protect from the evil spirits and save the devotees from all sorts of calamities. As a mark of heart-felt devotion and dedication to this god, it is seen from some inscriptions that some people give the name of the god and of His *kshētra* to their children to gain His favour and blessings, a practice followed to this day. When this god is worshipped throughout the land, the worship becomes a cult, like that of Śrī Venkatesvara of Tīrumala.

The origin, antiquity and growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema is tapped from archaeological and literary sources, including the *sthalapurāṇas* and traditions. Comparatively, there are fewer grants in the early period (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) of our study and as we go on to the later period i.e. the Vijayanagara period, there are a number of grants made to the temples of Narasimha by the ruling dynasties. The third chapter shows by analysing the available material, how the cult of Narasimha had slowly and steadily grown from the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is to be noted during these centuries, Narasimha cult was prevalent in the four districts i.e. in Cuddāpah, Kurnool, Anantapūr and Chittoor districts of Rāyalaseema.

The antiquity of the Narasimha cult in Rāyalaseema goes back to the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as evidenced by the rare sculptured panel of nine deities along with Vishnu as Narasimha (Man-lion) at Peddamuḍiyam (**plate No. 1**) in Cuddāpah district of Rāyalaseema.<sup>1</sup> In this panel, there is a representation of nine deities

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including Narasimha which is third in order from the left. This panel shows Narasimha as standing in *samabhaṅga* with only two arms in *kaṭi-hasta* posture. He wears a *makuṭa*, *yaṅṇōpavīta*, and *pūrṇōruka* and has erected ears, round eyes and open mouth. This panel represents the earliest iconography of Narasimha which existed in 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century in Rāyalaseema. From 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the authentic information to reconstruct the history of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema is scanty. But from 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we have sufficient epigraphic evidence to trace out the growth of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. The cult of Narasimha had made a steady beginning of growth in 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was patronised by the Western Chālukyas (973 - 1198. A.D.) and their feudatories. The earliest known inscription of 12<sup>th</sup> century is of 1124 A.D from Peḍḍamudiyam during the reign of the Western Chālukya king Tribhuvana malladēva.<sup>2</sup> During the rule of the Western Chālukyas, the cult of Narasimha received patronage in the areas corresponding to the present Cuddapah and Kurnool districts in Rāyalaseema. The Hōyasalas (1100-1342 A.D.) and Yādavas (1187 - 1312 A.D.) had also contributed their patronisation of cult during 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. Their inscriptions found at Jeelavāṇipalli of Cuddapah district and Chinna Tumbalam in Kurnool district testify their patronage.<sup>3</sup>

The Kākatiyas of Warangal (1000-1323 A.D.) heralded a new era in the history of Āndhra Pradesh, protecting the kingdom from the onslaughts of muslims and patronising art and letters. Though the Kākatiyas are said to have leaning towards Saivism, they were tolerant of other faiths and sects of Hinduism. Among the Kākatiyas,

Pratāparudra (1295 - 1323 AD) supported the growth of this cult and the temple of Ahōbīlam was the centre of Narasimha worship patronised by him<sup>4</sup> From 12<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the Kākatiyas of Warangal, the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema developed slowly and steadily. From 1324 A.D to 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, the cult of Narasimha spread by leaps and bounds. During this period, the cult was patronised by different dynasties that ruled over Rāyalaseema. They were the Reddys of Koṇḍaviḍu and Rājahmundry, the Rāyas of Vijayanagara and their feudatory family, the Nandyāla chiefs who enriched the temple of Ahōbīlam by their munificent grants. The Reddys of Koṇḍaviḍu and Rājamahēndravaram were sincere devotees of god Narasimha and a number of their liberal grants to the temple of Ahōbīlam supports this view.<sup>5</sup>

The rule of Rāyas of Vijayanagara (1336 - 1680 A.D.) heralded a new era in the annals of Rāyalaseema. The kings of Vijayanagara were patrons and saviours of Hindu dharma. The period of Vijayanagara kings (14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century AD) witnessed considerable growth of the cult of Narasimha and its popularity in Rāyalaseema. From the second part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century, under the fervent patronisation of the Rāyas of Vijayanagara, the cult had grown in popularity by leaps and bounds. King Harihara II, Sāluva Narasimha, (1456 - 1490 A.D.) Krishnadevarāya, (1509 - 1529 A.D.) Achyutarāya, (1529 - 1542 A.D.) Sadāśivarāya (1542 - 1576 A.D.) and Śrī Rāga - 1 (1572 - 1585 A.D.) seem to be the strong supporters of Srivaishnavism, though they encouraged other sects of Hinduism. King Hanhara-II



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(1377 - 1404 A.D.) struck coins with the emblem of Lakshmi Narasimha.<sup>6</sup> Another king Sāluva Narasimha states in the introduction to his work 'Rāmābhudayan' that he was born by the grace of god Narasimha of Ahōbīlam.<sup>7</sup> The cult of Narasimha was on increase from the reign of Krishṇadēvarāya to the reign of Sadāsiva. Krishṇadēvarāya was a staunch supporter of Vaiṣṇavism, known from his grants given to the temples, dedicated to god Vishnu Ahōbīlam, the centre of Narasimha worship was the major recipient from the treasury of Krishṇadēvarāya.<sup>8</sup> Achyutarāya struck the coins with the emblem of 'Gaṇḍabhērunda' which is said to be an aspect of god Narasimha.<sup>9</sup> The reign of king Sadāsiva is a landmark and epoch - making in the history of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema, because there are more than fifty grants made to the temples of Narasimha.<sup>10</sup> His reign was favorable for the growth and popularity of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. In addition to these kings, other kings Bukka I<sup>11</sup>, Dēvarāya-II<sup>12</sup>, (1422-1446 A D ) Mallikārjuna<sup>13</sup> (1447-1465 A.D) and Venkatapatirāya-II<sup>14</sup> (1585-1614 A D) had patronised the temples of Narasimha. Besides, there are several grants made to the temples of Narasimha by private individuals which cover the period from 1404 AD to 1636 AD.<sup>15</sup> Among all the dynasties, it is the Vijayanagara which made the maximum number of grants to the temples of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. During the glorious period of the Vijayanagara kings, the cult has spread to all the four districts of Rāyalaseema. The following are the twenty-five centres of Narasimha worship patronised by the Vijayanagar kings in Rāyalaseema.

**KURNOOL DISTRICT**

1. Ahōbīlam
2. Būdūru

**CUDDAPAH DISTRICT**

3. Vōnūtula (Vogunutala)
4. Gaṇḍikōṭa
5. Bōmmavaram
6. Pōttipāḍu
7. Kalluṭṭa
8. Imakallu
9. Perivaram
10. Peddamudiyam
11. Mōṭakatla
12. Timma Nayanpēta.

**ANANTAPŪR DISTRICT**

13. Kadirī
14. Gutti (Gooty)
15. Hirya Dhalivate
16. Chāgalēru
17. Dharmavaram
18. Pennahōbīlam
19. Yadlapalli
20. Uravakonḍa
21. Penugonḍa

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### **CHITTOOR DISTRICT**

22 Tirumala

23 Kapilātīrtham

24. Śrīnivāsapuram-(suburb of Tirupati).

25 Tanigonda

The above stated centres testify to the popularity of the cult of Narasimha during the period of study. Of the above stated centres, Ahōbīlam in Kurnool district, Kadiri and Pennahōbīlam in Anantapur district emerged as the major centres of Narasimha worship in Rāyalaseema. Among these major centres, Ahōbīlam again stands first in the patronisation by various dynasties. This temple grew in popularity during the Vijayanagar period only. In the history of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema, the association of god Narasimha with a Chēnchu woman is an interesting and thought provoking matter. The Chēnchus, one of the aboriginal tribes of Rāyalaseema, claim that Narasimha is their god who had married Chēnchita, a woman of their tribe. The association of Chēnchita with god Narasimha goes back to 1354 A.D. which is the earliest known sculptural evidence of Chēnchu tribe found so far in Rāyalaseema. The sculptures of god Narasimha and Chēnchita at lower Ahōbīlam, Upper Ahōbīlam and at Ugra Narasimha temple at Peddamuḍiyam speak in unmistakable terms the association of god Narasimha with Chēnchita. The Chēnchus claim that god Narasimha is their brother-in-law since the god married a woman of their tribe. The Chēnchus enjoy certain privileges even now in the temple at Ahōbīlam in Kurnool district.

Following are the extant major centres of Narasimha worship in the four districts of Rāyalaseema.

S.No.	Name of the centre	Taluk and District
1	Ahōbīlam	Ājjagadda Taluk, Kurnool district
2.	Kadiri	Kadiri Taluk, Anantapūr district
3.	Gutti (Gooty)	Gutti Taluk, Anantapūr district
4.	Pennahōbīlam	Uravakonda Taluk, Anantapūr district
5.	Peddamuḍḍyam	Jammalamadugu Taluk, Cuḍdapah district
6	Tirumala	Chandragiri Taluk, Chittoor district

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. there are a number of grants made to the above extant centres of Narasimha by the kings, feudatory chiefs and private individuals for the conduct of worship and offerings to the god. From the inscriptions, we come to know that *utsavās*, such as (a) *nitvōtsavas* (b) *vārōtsavas*, (c) *pakshōtsavas* (d) *māsōtsavas* and (e) *vārshōtsavas* were celebrated to the god. The records mention that besides these *utsavas*, the rituals were performed to the god in the temples. In addition to the *utsavas* and rituals, other *utsavas*, viz (i) *Anigarāṅabhōgas* (ii) *Divya Mōhotsavas* (iii) *Mahōtsavas* (iv) *Dōla-utsavās* (v) *Brahmōtsavam* (vi) *Rathōtsavam* (vii) *Tirunālḷu* and (viii) *Aṣṭamangalālu* were also celebrated in the temples

## Conclusion

Besides these utsavas, certain common festivals such as (i) *Ēkādaśī* (ii) *Kārthika Deepavalī* (iii) *Śrī jayanī* (iv) *Vasānta Purnamā* (v) *Kshīrābdhī* (vi) *Vijayadāsamī* (vii) *Pārvatīthī Mahōtsava* (viii) *Vasānta utsava* and (ix) *Pañchaparvas* were celebrated in the temples of Narasimha under study. It is interesting to note that an undated inscription from the Lower Ahōbīlam, clearly mentions that the temple had celebrated 220 festival days in a year. All these utsavas, rituals and common festivals have been discussed in detail in the fifth chapter.

Regarding the iconography of Narasimha, nine forms of Narasimha are found in the temples of Rāyalaseema. From the survey of the select centres of Narasimha worship, the images and sculptures of (1) Kēvala Narasimha (2) Girijā Narasimha (3) Yōga Narasimha (4) Sthauna Narasimha (5) Lakshmi Narasimha (6) Yōgananda Lakshmi Narasimha (7) Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha. (8) Prahalādanugraha mūrti and (9) Narasimha and Chēnchita (Narasimha wooing Chēnchita) are found in Rāyalaseema. From the available examples, the highest number belongs to Yōga Narasimha, then follows Girijā Narasimha, Sthauna Narasimha and Lakshmi Narasimha.

Among the above said nine forms, the following are the most noteworthy images and sculptures for their special features.

S.No.	Name of the image/ sculpture	Place	Plate No.
1	Girijā Narasimha	Tirumala	2
2	Narasimha seated on a lion	Tirumala	5
3.	Yōga Narasimha	Kadiri	10
4.	Sthauna Narasimha		
	(a) Stambōdbhava Narasimha	Kadiri	11
	(b) Narasimha fighting the demon	Upper Ahōbīlam	14
	(c) Vidāraṇa Narasimha	Tirumala	19
	(d) Vidāraṇa Narasimha	Upper Ahōbīlam	-
5.	Yōgananda Lakshmi Narasimha	Lower Ahōbīlam	-
6.	Varāha Lakshmi Narasimha	Lower Ahōbīlam	24
7	Prahlādanugrahamūrti	Pennahōbīlam	
8	Narasimha and Chēnachita	Lower Ahōbīlam	25

An interesting feature of iconography of Narasimha is that in the early sculptural representation at Peddamuḍiyam (Plate 1), the lion face is natural and later on in the medieval representation it is stylized. According to the inscriptions available, the god was known by different names, viz., Sri Aubala dēvara, Varāha Narasimhanātha, Narasiṅga Perimāl, Alagiya Ś.ṅgar, Adipputiadi Ś.ṅgar, Khadri Narasimhadēva, Kapala Narasimhaswamy, Yōgananda Narasimhaswamy, Prahlāda Varada, Sri Ahōbālēśvara, Ahōbīla Vīra Narasimhadēva, Sri Ahōbīladeva and Lakshmi Narasimhamūrti. The different names of god Narasimha mentioned above, are even now popular in Rāyalaseema. The survey of Narasimha images show

### *Conclusion*

that Narasimha was regarded as one of the most favourite incarnations of Vishnu in Rāyalaseema. The study of the iconographic features of Narasimha reveals that the early images of Narasimha are two armed, but as the cult expanded, the iconography of Narasimha became expanded growing into multiple arms i.e. four, six, eight, ten and sixteen armed Narasimha. Narasimha worship as is evident from his iconography is influenced by Tantrism. In Rayalaseema area, the earliest and the popular form is Sthauna Narasimha (1335 A.D.). Along with this form, Lakshmi Narasimha was also popular. During the period of study, in general, the form of Lakshmi Narasimha was more popular than the other varieties of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema.

God Narasimha occupies the position of a cult deity rather remaining merely an incarnation of Vishnu. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., there was slow and steady development of the cult of Narasimha in Rāyalaseema. But from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the cult was very much developed and it reached its climax in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were no new developments in the process of the popularity of the cult of Narasimha owing to a number of reasons which are discussed in the first Chapter of the book and this cult which is facing so many vicissitudes, continues as such even to this day.

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2. SII, Vol IX, part I, No 207
3. *A.P. Govt Report on Epigraphy*, 1965 No 9, p 10, SII Vol IX Part I, No 367, P 384
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7. Aiyangar, S K. *Sources of Vijayanagara History*, p 83
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9. Narasimhā Mūrti, A V, *Coins of Karnataka* p. 147 (Namaste Narasimhaya Garuda: erunda rūpine)
10. TTDI Vol Nos 2, 3 and 132
11. M. Vol (SA) No 137 p 27, SII, vol XVI No 4; IAD, Vol II part I. Anantapūr District No 236, Ramanayya, N.V (ed) *Cuddapah Inscriptions*, p 20
12. Rangāchārya, V (ed) *A Topographical list of Inscriptions of Madras Presidency*, Vol. II No 457
13. M Vol (SA) No. 269 pp 139-140
14. SII, Vol. XVI, No 310
15. Ibid, Vol XVII No 284; *Inscriptions of Madras Presidency*, Vol I, Anantapūr District, No 152.



APPENDIX - TABULAR STATEMENT OF THE TEMPLES OF NARASIMHA SWAMY IN RAYALASEEMA

S No	Location	Name of the Deity	Year	King	Dynasty	Epigraphical reference
1	KURNOOL DISTRICT					
1	Pedda Umbalam	Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	1137 A D	Someshwara I	Western Chalukyas	ARE 1956-57 B S No 46
2	Chinna Umbalam Swamy	Vogaranda Narasimha	1229 A D	Jaitugi	Vadava	S, Vol X Part 1 S No 367 P 394
3	Athoblam Swamy	Athobla Narasimha	1335 A D	Prityayavema Reddy	Reddies of Kondavēdu	.AD Vol I Part I Gunūr Dist S.No. 472 p 274
			1378 A D	Anavēma Reddy	-do-	Ibid Vol part Gunūr Dist S No 210 p 249
			1410 A D	Katama Reddy vema Reddy	Rajamahendra Varam Reddis	SI Vol X No 577
4	Ālamjū	Narasimha Swamy	1550 A D	Ahujala Rā	Vijayanagara	SI Vol XVI S No 174
5	Būdū	Ahobla Narasimha Swamy	1560 A D	GobunAlubhaia Rajayya Mahārā	Vijayanagara	SI Vol X S No 671
6	Annasānudram	Sr Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy				-

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7	Narasāpūram	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy				-	-
8	R Krishnā Puram	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy					-
9	Yedavada	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy				-	-
10	Rāmāleeratham	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy					-
11	Kurukuntla	Kambagiri Narasimha Swamy					-
12	Uppalapādu	Kambagiri Narasimha Swamy					-
13	Kolimgundla	Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy				-	-
14	Servēpalli	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy				-	-
15	Rangāpūram	Maddilēti Narasimha Swamy				-	-
16	Mundlapādu	Maddilēti Narasimha Swamy					-
17	Timmanaipalli	Narasimha Swamy					-
18	Kadin	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	S1274 = 1352 A D S1289 1367 A D S1339 = 1418 A D S1469 1547 A D	Bukka 1 Bukka 1 Devaraya 1 Sadasiwaraya	Vijayanagara Vijayanagara Vijayanagara Vijayanagara	Sli vol XVI SNo 4 S Vol IX SNo 438 S Vol IX SNo 242 ibid S No 111	
19	Chilamattūr	Narasimha Swamy	1367=A D	Bukka I Ingappa Jadayar	Vijayanagara		
20	Gonipeta	Narasimha Swamy	S1339 = 1417 A D				
21	Somagatta	Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	S1415 = 1493 A D			Copper plate Gazetteer p 901	
J. ANANTAPUR DISTRICT							

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22	Jrayakonda	Singāswara Mahādēva Narasimha Swamy	≈ 1503 A.D.	Private grant		IIAD, Vol. I, Part- Anantapur(Dist.) Gudli (Takuka), S No. 144 p 14
23	Hiraya Dhaliveta	Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	≈ 1512 A.D.	Ellayya, Servant of Krishnadēvarāya	Vijayanagara	S I Vol IX SNo 485
24	Kōtta Chinnā Kunja	Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	≈ 1527 A.D.			
25		Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy	≈ 1529 A.D.	Sri Krishna Dēvarāya	Vijayanagara	M Vol (S.A) No 272, PP 95-96
26	Chāgalēru	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1455- 1533 A.D.	Acyutharāya	Vijayanagara	S - IX, 560
27	Dhamavaram	Mandem Narasimha Swamy	Ś1095 - 1533 A.D.	Chinna Tumalāyya deva	Vijayanagara	SII Vol XVI SNo 106
28	Penna Ahōbīlam	Ahōbila Narasimha Swamy	≈ 1553 A.D. Ś1478 = 1556 A.D. Ś1481 - 1559 A.D.	ChinnaTumala Dēvaraju Sadasiva Rāya Kōṇḍapu Dēvara Rajayya Devara Māharaju	Vijayanagara Vijayanagara Vijayanagara	SII Vol XVI SNo.187 SII Vol IX SNo 563 Ibid SNo. 425 p 26

29	Magarikani	Anbilla Narasimha Swamy	= 1554 A.D	JillelaVergala yyadeva Mahārāja	Vijayanagara	IAD Guntūr District, Vol. I, Part-I, SNo 414
30	Pāṇḍi	Sr Bhāgāswara Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1476 = 1554 A.D	Sadāśivaraya	Vijayanagara	ARE, 351 of 1920
31	Yarabommana-palli	Narasimha Swamy	Ś1477 1555 A.D	Timmadēva	-	Gazetter Anantapūr Dist p No 919
32	Gooty	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1478 1556 A.D	Sadāśivarāya	Vijayanagara	M Vo. (S A) No 153 Gooty Kalayat PP 1-2
33	Nāgasamudram	Kadirappa Swamy	Ś1480 = 1558 A.D			
34	Penugonda	Narasimha Swamy	=1636 A.D	Private Grant	-	scriptions of Madras Presidency vol. 1 Anantapūr Dist SNo 152
35	Yedlapalle	Yogananda Narasimha Swamy	= 1429 A.D	Allado Avabhalanna		ARE, 1921 Anantapūr District Gooty (Taluk) SNo 680 P 49
36	Bāṇḍāṇḍi	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy			-	Census - p 851
37	Pennanduru	Madla Ōbula Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy			-	
38	Salakam Cheruvu	Narasimha Swamy			-	
39	Kundurpi	Kariba Narasimha Swamy			-	

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40	Rallagurta	Kamba Narasimha Swamy				
41	Rōita	Kariba Narasimha Swamy				
42	Kod Konda	Kariba Narasimha Swamy				
43	Enmālavāṇḍia- pall	Kariba Narasimha Swamy				
44	Sasarakōta	Naras mha Swamy				
45	Jamburapādu	Naras mha Swamy				
46	Obuladevarapalli	Ahōbala Narasimha Swamy				
47	Bukkapaṭṇam	Ahōbala Narasimha Swamy				
48	Yallanūr	Narasimha Swamy				
49	Uddihalli	Narasimha Swamy				
50	Āmdala	Naras mha Swamy				
51	Pemār	Naras mha Swamy				
52	Jamburapāṭem	Naras mha Swamy				
53	Madikūṭam	Naras mha Swamy				
54	Jutūr	Naras mha Swamy				
55	Bōredōpalli	Naras mha Swamy				

CHITTOOR DISTRICT

56	Trimala	Yōga Narasimha Swamy	Ś1326 = 1404 A.D	Giri Dēvappa Private grant	-	S. Vol. XVI S No.284
57	Srinivasapuram	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	= 1450 A.D	Private grant	-	IAD, Chittoor District, Part I, S No 495
58	Triupati	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	= 1485 A.D	Kandāṭya, Kumāra Rāmānujangaṛ	-	Ibid S No 3
59	Tirumalareddypalli	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1465 1543 A.D		-	
60	Kapilāsthām	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1467 = 20.6.1546 A.D.		-	
61	Tarigonda	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	Ś1481 = 1559 A.D Ś1768 1846 A.D Ś1784 1862 A.D	Sadas, varāya Errappa Kusumaseṭṭi	Vijayanagara	ARE 446 of 1940-41 ARE 447 of 1940-41 ARE 448 of 1940-41
62	Chintamākuṭiapalli	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy			-	
63	Pāṇepalli	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy			-	

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64	Kothavārpalli	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
65	Kopplamāgri	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
66	Kallam	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
67	Dāvālampāla	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
68	Medikurth	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
69	Perumāllapalli	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	-	-	-	-
IV CUDDAPAH DISTRICT						
70	Peddaniudiyaṁ	Ugra & Yōganēndia Narasimha Swamy	Ś 1046 = 1124 A.D. 1551 A.D. ▲ 1557 A.D.	Mahāmandalēswara Chiddana Chōla Mahārāja Chinnabānavayya Tribhuvane Ma. adēva Gourayya & Nāgayya	Western Chajyas Vijayanagara	Slit Vol. IX, Part-I S No 237 and S No 207 M Vol (SA) No 272, PP 82-83 M Vol (SA) No.272 P 83-84 & ibid pp 83-84

71	Jīvaśrīpālī	Vīra Narasimha Swamy	12 & 13th Century A.D. (1144-45)	Saṁśrīva (Name lost) Hoyasala Ballaśaḍḍeva	Hōyasala	A.P. Govt. Report on Epigraphy for 1965, S No.9.
72	Kondasunkūṣala	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	Ś 1266 = 1344 A.D.	Mahāmandalēswara	Vijayanagara	Ind. 367 of 1832-33
73	Vandāla	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	= 1350 A.D.	Bukka - I	Vijayanagara	M Vol (SA) No 132, P 27
74	Gaṇḍikōṭa	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	= 1375 A.D.	-	Vijayanagara	Cuddapah Inscriptions P 20
75	Vaṇṇūṭala (Veyṇṇūṭala kōṇa)	Ahōbēśwara Narasimha Swamy	Ś 1369 = 1370 A.D.	Māṅgayyadēva	Vijayanagara	ARE 1938-39 Appendix S.No 338
76	Pōṭṭāṭṭu	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	1529 A.D.	Rāyasam Ananthayya Timmanūṣu Yennamanayudu	Vijayanagara	Cuddapah Inscriptions pp.36-37.
77	Kongunūṭala	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	Ś 1455=1534 A.D.	Achyutarāya	Vijayanagara	-
78	Pūrunāṁṇila	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	= 1532 A.D.	Achyuthadevarāya	Vijayanagara	SI <sup>II</sup> Vol. XVI, S.No 96
79	Imakkalu	Srī Lakṣmī Narasimha Swamy	=1545 A.D.	Ahōbalayyadeva Maharāja	Vijayanagara	Cuddapah Inscriptions, P 389



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80	Periyavaram	Ahōbala Narasimha Swamy	=1546 A.D	Mahamendalēswara Rāghavara J (Nañōyala Chief)	Viayanagara	IAD Cuddapah District, Part I, S No 176
81		Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	S 1470 1548 A.D	Sadāśivarāya	Viayanagara	-
82	Bomnavaram	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy	S 1470 = 1548 A.D	Ghennakēśavarāju	Viayanagara	ARE 1938-39, Appen- dix-8 S No 373
83	Timmanāyanipēta Swamy	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha	= 1552 A.D	Karanam-Obuapali		M Vol, (SA) No 116. Trinimanayanipela, Kalfiyat pp 49-50
84	Motukatta	Ahōbala Narasimha Swamy	= 1552 A.D	Sadāśivarāya	Viayanagara	IAD Cuddapah District, Part II, No 271
85	Pennipēṭṭu	Narasimha Swamy				
86	Chinnakōṇṇṇa	Narasimha Swamy				
87	Arūḷḷam (Pulivendla)	Ahōbaleswara				ARE 1 of 1946 47
88	Yēṭṭu Narasimha Swamy					

## REFERENCE GLOSSARY

<b>Abhaya</b>	: Palam open with fingers.
<b>Abhishekam</b>	: Religious rite of pouring or sprinkling sacred water on the image of deity.
<b>Āchāryas</b>	: Spiritual teacher
<b>Ādri</b>	: Hill
<b>Adippuliāḍi-Singar</b>	: Narasimha Swamy (Alipiri at Tirupati)
<b>Āgamas</b>	: Sacred Texts related to
<b>Agnigundam</b>	: Fire pit.
<b>Agrahāram</b>	: The village given as donation to Brahmans.
<b>Akhaṇḍa Deepam</b>	: Perpetual lamp
<b>Aligiya-Singar</b>	: God Narasimha (Aligiya – Beautiful).
<b>Alankāra</b>	: Decoration, Ornamentation.
<b>Ālavattam</b>	: A thing used as a fan.
<b>Ālvār</b>	: A Vaisnavite Saint
<b>Amrutamani</b>	: Offering given to the deity.
<b>Amrutha Sñānam</b>	: Sacred bath with a mixture of honey, curd, coconut water and sugar.
<b>Anṅarāṅgabhōgas</b>	: Procession and rituals with pomp
<b>Ankurārpanam</b>	: Commencement of festival etc ,
<b>Amāvāsya</b>	: New moon day.
<b>Antarāla</b>	: Ante-chamber.
<b>Anjali</b>	: Both palms joined in salutation
<b>Ārādhana</b>	: Special worship.

<b>Ardhparyānkāsana</b>	: A seated posture in which one leg is tucked upon a seat, while the other is dangling.
<b>Archaka</b>	: Priest - one who conducts worship.
<b>Archana</b>	: Worship.
<b>Ardhōruka</b>	: Shorts
<b>Ātma</b>	: Soul.
<b>Appāpadi</b>	: Prasadam
<b>Atirasapadi</b>	: A kind of sweet cake.
<b>Avatāra</b>	: Incarnation.
<b>BalaBhōgam</b>	: Offering of narvedyam in the early hours of the day
<b>Balihāraṇa</b>	: Cooked rice offered round the temple-deity
<b>Beejaksharas</b>	: Seed words
<b>Bhakti</b>	: Devotion to god, loyalty, faith.
<b>Bhajan</b>	: Singing in chorus in praise of God
<b>Bhōgam</b>	: Food offering to the deity
<b>Bāṇa</b>	: Arrow
<b>Binde Sēva</b>	: Bringing water from Kōneru (well or pond) or river for worshipping the deity
<b>Bramhōtsavam</b>	: Grand festival, annual festival.
<b>Bugga</b>	: Water Spring.
<b>Chakra</b>	: Disc, the weapon of Lord Vishnu
<b>Chāmara</b>	: Fan made of Silk fibres for fanning the celestial beings.
<b>Chandanam</b>	: Sandal paste
<b>Chaturmasa Vratam</b>	: Four months Vratam
<b>Dadhyōdanam</b>	: Curd food offerings.
<b>Darsan</b>	: Audience
<b>Dasāvataras</b>	: Ten incarnations of God Vishnu.
<b>Deepa</b>	: Light.

### ***Reference Glossary***

<b>Deepārādhana</b>	: Burning of oil lamps.
<b>Deepasthambam</b>	: Lamp Pillar.
<b>Dēvatas</b>	: Celestial beings.
<b>Dhanurmāsōtsavam</b>	: Month during which early worship to God is celebrated.
<b>Dhruvabēra</b>	: Presiding deity.
<b>Dhūpam</b>	: The wave of incense smoke.
<b>Dvajarohana</b>	: Inauguration of the festival
<b>Dvajasthambham</b>	: Pillar in front of the temple.
<b>Dhayāna</b>	: Meditation.
<b>Dōlarohanōtsavam</b>	: Procession of a deity on a swing
<b>Dvārapālakas</b>	: Sentenels on either side at the entrance of a temple.
<b>Dvāradarsanam</b>	: Visiting the Lord at the main gate of a temple
<b>Ēkādaśi</b>	: Eleven.
<b>Ēkāntasēva</b>	: Worship involving placing the lord and his consort in a swing
<b>Ēru</b>	: River
<b>Gadha</b>	: Club
<b>Garudadēepam</b>	: The lamp being a big hollow earthen plate filled with oil with thickly twisted wicks of cotton thread, the wicks burning before the image of the deity
<b>Gāligōpuram</b>	: Tower
<b>Gandham</b>	: Sandal wood paste.
<b>Garudasēva</b>	: Procession on a vehicle depicting the sacred kite.
<b>Gala, Grēeva</b>	: Neck
<b>Garbhagriha</b>	: Sactum Sanctorum, inner sanctum.

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<b>Garuḍa</b>	: Sacred kite, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, a divine eagle.
<b>Gāvi</b>	: Cave.
<b>Gōpura</b>	: Main gate way
<b>Giri</b>	: Hill
<b>Girdle</b>	: Belt
<b>Gōḍavu</b>	: An umbrella.
<b>Graivēyaka</b>	: Neck ornaments
<b>Hārati</b>	: Wave offering.
<b>Havāhanam</b>	: Rituals connected with offerings to the god of fire
<b>Hārā</b>	: Necklace
<b>Hōmam</b>	: Sacrifice, Offerings made to the god of fire
<b>Ishta Dēvata</b>	: Chosen deity
<b>Jāgarana</b>	: Keeping awake through out the night in meditation
<b>Jātra</b>	: Fair.
<b>Jatamakuta</b>	: Crown of locks of hair
<b>Jayanthi</b>	: Birthday.
<b>Jñāna</b>	: Spiritual knowledge.
<b>Kaifiyat</b>	: A document.
<b>Kalyāṇōtsavam</b>	: Marriage Ceremony
<b>Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa</b>	: Wedding Hall.
<b>Khadira</b>	: A kind of tree.
<b>Katyavalambita</b>	: The pose of the hand when the arm is let down hanging by the side of the body and hand is made to rest on the lions.
<b>Kīrtanas</b>	: Songs in praise of God

### *Reference Glossary*

<b>Khaḍgam</b>	: A sword.
<b>Kaṅkaṇa</b>	: Wrist let
<b>Kēyura</b>	: Ornament for the shoulder
<b>Kirīṭam</b>	: Crown
<b>Kīrtimukha</b>	: Lion's face
<b>Kōṇēru</b>	: Pond.
<b>Kōras</b>	: Canine teeth.
<b>Kōra-mīṣaḥ</b>	: Sharp moastaches.
<b>Krōḍha</b>	: Anger
<b>Kucabandha</b>	: Breast band
<b>Kshētram</b>	: A holy place.
<b>Kundala</b>	: Ear ornament
<b>Leelās</b>	: Plays
<b>Mahādvāra</b>	: Main Entrance.
<b>Maṇḍapam</b>	: A small room with pillars and roof all of stone, a structure for placing an idol
<b>Mahātyam</b>	: Power of greatness
<b>Mahōtsavam</b>	: Great festival
<b>Makuta</b>	: A crown.
<b>Makara Sankramana</b>	: The time when the sun returns to the north
<b>Manjiras</b>	: Ornaments worn below the ankle
<b>Makara Tōraṇam</b>	: A type of feston in a temple, makara canopy
<b>Maṇyams</b>	: Inams.
<b>Maṇḍalēsvara</b>	: Head of a small region

<b>Maṅgala Hārati</b>	: Flame of prosperity offered to the God at the end of an auspicious event.
<b>Mangalasnānam</b>	: Bath of deity in a river
<b>Maṭh or Muṭṭ</b>	: Monastery, place of residence of religious mendicants
<b>Mula Vighraṃamu</b>	: Presiding deity.
<b>Mudra</b>	: Gesture with fingers
<b>Mudrapulu</b>	: A promised offer
<b>Muggulu</b>	: Floor decoration drawn with flour
<b>Mukhaṃaṇḍapa</b>	: Entrance hall.
<b>Nāga</b>	: Cobra
<b>Naivēdyam</b>	: Offering in kind made to the deity
<b>Nāmam</b>	: Vaishnavite caste mark.
<b>Nāmasaṅkīrtana</b>	: Sing in praise the names of the God.
<b>Nambī</b>	: A priest.
<b>Narasimha</b>	: Man Lion.
<b>Nīlōtpala</b>	: The blue lily
<b>Nityārchana</b>	: Daily worship
<b>Nitya Deepārādhana</b>	: Burning oil-lamps daily
<b>Nitya Naivēdyam</b>	: Daily food offering to the deity
<b>Nritya</b>	: Dance.
<b>Pādma</b>	: Lotus.
<b>Padmāsana</b>	: An erect sitting posture with both the legs folded
<b>Pallaki Sēva</b>	: Procession of a deity in a palanquin
<b>Panaṅgam</b>	: Jaggery water
<b>Pārāyana</b>	: Recitation.
<b>Pāruvēta</b>	: PĀRU means run and VĒTA means hunt.

## ***Refference Glossary***

<b>Pāṣa</b>	: Bandage.
<b>Pōngali</b>	: A preparation with rice and green gramdhal
<b>Paṭṭa</b>	: Band.
<b>Pīṭha</b>	: Pedestal.
<b>Prabha</b>	: A long stand with a conical tip and covered with a designed cloth.
<b>Prabhā mandalam</b>	: Nimbus
<b>Prākāram</b>	: Compound wall.
<b>Pradakshnam</b>	: Going round the deity
<b>Prasādam</b>	: Food offering to the deity
<b>Pratiṣṭha</b>	: Consecration, Installation.
<b>Pulihōra</b>	: A preparation with rice and tamarind juice etc.
<b>Pūja</b>	: Worship.
<b>Pūrnōruka</b>	: Trousers
<b>Purāṇas</b>	: Hindu religious books.
<b>Pushkariṇi</b>	: Sacred pond.
<b>Pushpamālalu</b>	: Garland of flowers.
<b>Pushpa Vātika</b>	: Flower Garden.
<b>Rākshaṣa</b>	: Demon
<b>Rāmānujakūtam</b>	: Sacred feeding house.
<b>Raṅgamaṇḍapam</b>	: The front hall
<b>Rathōthsavam</b>	: Car festival
<b>Sakatōtsavam</b>	: Carfestival
<b>Samabhaṅga</b>	: Body with no bends
<b>Śamī</b>	: A kind of tree
<b>Śankha</b>	: Conch
<b>Sankīrtanam</b>	: Recitation of the glory of the God.



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<b>Śatakam</b>	: Book of 100 poems.
<b>Sejja</b>	: Putting the lord to bed.
<b>Śingapperumāl</b>	: God Narasimha.
<b>Śilpa Sāstra</b>	: Science of architecture
<b>Simhavāhanam</b>	: Lion vehicle.
<b>Slōka</b>	: Couplet or quatrain in San skrit.
<b>Sthambam</b>	: Pillar or column
<b>Stōtram</b>	: Uttering in praise of God or Goddess.
<b>Smārtas</b>	: The sect of Non- Vaishnavite Brahmins.
<b>Sukhāsana</b>	: A comfortable sitting posture
<b>Soumyharūpa</b>	: Graceful form.
<b>Sthalapurāṇa</b>	: History of the place
<b>Stotram</b>	: Praising , utterings in praise of god
<b>Svayambhu</b>	: Self manifest.
<b>Talambralu</b>	: Main function connected with the marriage
<b>Thāmbūlam</b>	: The whole apparatus of betel.
<b>Tīrtam</b>	: Sacred or sanctified water
<b>Teppōtsavam</b>	: Boat Procession
<b>Tirukkōḍi-Tirunāl</b>	: Brahmostavam.
<b>Tirumālai</b>	: Garland of basil leaves and flowers
<b>Tirumanjanam</b>	: Ablution
<b>Tirunāḷa</b>	: Fair, Festival
<b>Tirunakshatram</b>	: Natal constellations obtaining at the time of birth
<b>Tiruppavai Utsavam</b>	: Festival Celebrated in Dhanurmasam

### *Refference Glossary*

<b>Tiruppalli - eḷuḇchi</b>	: Dhanurmasa festival
<b>Tiru-Tōmala</b>	: Garland of leaves and flowers for Mulavirat
<b>Tōmala-Sēva</b>	: Decorating the God with flowers.
<b>Tulasi</b>	: The holy basil
<b>Udarabaṇḍha</b>	: Stomach belt
<b>Utsavam</b>	: Celebration.
<b>Ugra-rūpa</b>	: Awe inspiring posture.
<b>Usirikāya</b>	: <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>
<b>Utsava-Vigrahas</b>	: Procession images.
<b>Utkutikāsaṇa</b>	: Posture in which the deity sits with heels kept close to the bottom and with the back slightly curved
<b>Vāhanam</b>	: Vehicle.
<b>Vasāntōtsavam</b>	: Spring festival.
<b>Varada</b>	: Palm with the fingers pointing downwards
<b>Vēdamantras</b>	: Hymns of Vedas.
<b>Vigraha</b>	: An image or idol
<b>Vimāna</b>	: The tower over the main shrine.
<b>Vīrāsana</b>	: Sitting with the left leg bent at the knee and resting on the seat and the right leg hanging
<b>Viswarūpadarsanam</b>	: Showing of the original form of Sri Maha Vishnu
<b>Yajñōpavīta</b>	: Sacred thread
<b>Yagna</b>	: Sacrifice
<b>Yōga</b>	: Meditation.
<b>Yugadi</b>	: Telugu new years day Festival

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